

OEKOPATIA  
OR THE  
Divine Government  
OF NATIONS 45  
CONSIDERED and IMPROVED. 75

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IN A  
DISCOURSE  
TO THE  
SOCIETIES  
FOR  
Reformation of Manners  
IN  
*London and Middlesex.*

Preached on Monday May 15. 1699.

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By ROBERT FLEMING, V.D.M.

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*Published at their Request.*

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GEORGE A. T. I.

OF THE

PROVIDENT SOCIETY

OF NEW YORK

AND

THE

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1699  
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TO THE

# KING'S

Most Excellent Majesty,

May it please your Majesty,

**I** *Tis from no Ambition to be taken  
notice of, but from a sincere and  
heartly Concern for the Publick  
Welfare, that I make bold to en-  
title this small Piece to so Great and*

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Illustri-

Ms. N. N. 1699  
6/1/1692 Cat. 500 p 168 12/6 (cont.)

## Dedication.

*Illustrious a Patron.* The same sense of Duty that oblig'd me to yield to the Desire of the Societies for Reformation, both in preaching and publishing this Sermon, hath prevailed with me to put it into Your Royal Hands, That you may be pleas'd, as the True Father of Your People, to encourage the Design and End it aims at, which is no less than a National Good.

The Supream Providence hath honoured Your Majesty, as by many Marks of his Favour, so by this, That these Societies were born in the beginning of Your Auspicious Reign. And, as they had their Rise with it, and have grown up since under the benign Influences thereof; so they do still encourage themselves in the hope of Your Majesty's continued Protection: the Glory of God and the Honour and Safety of the Government

## Dedication.

vernment and Nation, being the only things they propose to carry on in a legal and peaceable way.

All Human Governments, especially Regular Monarchies, are Pictures of the Divine; but Your Majesty's is most eminently so. For, as you are both the Deliverer and Choice of the Nations you govern; so you rule them as reasonable Creatures and a Free People, giving Liberty to all, but allowing Licentiousness to none.

Your Majesty's recommending Reformation so frequently and pathetically, both in your Speeches to your Parliaments and Proclamations to your Subjects, that the Laws might be put in due execution against open Wickedness, doth fully assure us, that it is none of the least of your Regal Cares and Heroical Designs, to raise the Genius of your People by bettering their Morals.

This

## Dedication.

*This is indeed an Attempt worthy  
such a Monarch; the Prosecution and  
Accomplishment of which will fur-  
ther characterise your Majesty both as  
Good and Great, and lay a just Foun-  
dation of Your being particularly known  
by the Title of Defender of the Faith.  
And it is the constant and earnest Pray-  
er of your best Subjects, that you may  
be as prosperous in Peace, in conquer-  
ing intestine Vices and Impieties, as  
You were Glorious in War, against fo-  
reign Enemies: That thus your Royal  
Example and Influence may render the  
Endeavours of Good Men this way more  
diffusive and successful, as well as  
stir up others to concur in this honour-  
able and necessary Work, which still re-  
quires more hands.*

*The Design therefore of this small  
Essay being to give such an account of  
Theocracy or the Divine Government of  
Nati-*

## Dedication.

Nations, as might incite to, and assist towards the promoting so noble an end: I was emboldned to address Your Majesty after this manner, leaving the Subject and Scope to apologize for the Defects of the Performance.

May the Divine Goodness long preserve your Sacred Person and Precious Life, in Mercy to Europe and the World, and for the Good and Peace of this Kingdom and your other Dominions. May you ever grow and encrease in Happiness and Glory; honoured by your Allies, beloved by your Subjects, dreaded by your Enemies, and valued by all Men. May Success ever answer, and even exceed your Wishes, and true and lasting Fame enlighten Posterity with the Lustre of your Name and Glory of Your Actions: and of these may not only our present Deliverance and Peace, but the future Settlement

## Dedication.

ment and Security of these Kingdoms, be an eternal Monument: And may God, when he removes You from us (and oh! may it be late!) reward Your Cares and Labors with endless Felicity and Joy, and give You the Crown of Glory in exchange for your earthly Diadem. So prayeth,

Great S I R,

Your Majesty's most Humbly Devoted,  
and most Obedient Subject.

Robert Fleming.

Jer. XVIII. Ver. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

At what instant I shall speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down, and to destroy it: If that Nation against whom I have pronounced this, turn from their Evil, I will repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to build and to plant it: If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my Voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them.

Now therefore go to, speak to the man of Judah, and to the Inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Behold I frame Evil against you, and devise a Device against you: Return ye now every one from his evil Way, and make your Ways and your Doings good.

**T**HERE is hardly any Principle of Argumentation, from whence Purity of Life, and Reformation of Manners may not be urg'd and enforc'd. For whether we consider natural or revealed Religion; whether we think of God, our selves, or others; whether we reflect on Men apart, or in relation to Society, as to their Peace here, or Happiness hereafter; still we may by an easy

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Infe-



Inference find our thoughts terminate on Reformation and Piety, as a thing excellent in it self, and beneficial to Men; the very naming of which is enough to ravish the Souls of good Men, and to serve Convictions on the Consciences of the Wicked.

Therefore tho this Subject has been excellently discoursed of already, and prest from several of these Topicks, there is no fear of exhausting so copious and diffused an Argument, which like the Widow's Oil will be found to increase and run over, as long as there are Souls to receive its Ideas, or Mouths to impart them to others.

But this Consideration, dos rather overwhelm than ease my Mind, which finds it self so unequally match'd in attempting, tho at your desire, to speak of this Subject: For it is not the littleness but greatness of any thing that straitens a Man's Thoughts, by dissipating or swallowing them up; so that when he has most to say, he can oft say least. Hence it is we are told so pathetically in Scripture, how unable we are to comprehend God, whom we can as little grasp in our Minds, as we can the Sea in the hollow of our Hands. And from hence the Apostle *John* assures us, that if all had been written of Christ which the Matter was capable of, the World had been confounded with voluminous and endless Writings: and the Books that have been composed since his time make good his Hyperbole, if indeed it be one.

While therefore I considered the vastness of the Subject I was desir'd to recommend and urge at this time, and call'd to mind *Salomon's* Complaint, that he found Study tiresome, and Books endless, tho his Soul was of the largest  
Size

Isa. 40.

Job 11. 7,  
8, 9.

Joh. 21.  
ult.

## for Reformation of MANNERS.

3

Size and strongest Make that ever Man's was: I could not but conclude it necessary for me, so to accommodate my self to this Point, as to press it from one Topick only. Tho even in this I seem to have undertaken too great a Task, in proposing to consider and represent unto you in so short time, the Divine Providence as presiding over and governing Kingdoms and Nations, in order thence to incite you to publick and universal Reformation of Manners.

I shall not therefore trouble you, nor spend any part of our little time in angling for small Shreds of Truth by barren Criticisms upon the Words: tho I should have reckon'd it of use to consider these, if I had found any thing very material fetch'd from thence, to the Illustration of the Text, by any of the Masters of the Critical Art. But finding that the Septuagint and all other Versions I had opportunity to peruse, did render the Hebrew with respect to Matter and Scope, as our Interpreters do, I thought all my business was to consider the Import of the Words as they lie before us, in order to understand and improve them.

As an Introduction to this, I shall present you with the general Scope both of the Text and Context, from the first to the eighteenth Verse of this Chapter; which take as follows.

The Prophet *Jeremiah* having got a general Commission to reprove the Jews for their many Sins, and to threaten them with War, Desolation and Captivity, if they should continue disobedient, and not reform and repent, is in this Chapter sent to the Potter's House to have an emblematical Representation of God's Providence towards Men and Nations. When he

comes, the Wheels are going, and the Potter at work to make such a Vessel as he had prepar'd the Clay for. But it did not answer his purpose and expectation, but is marred in his hands, *i. e.* breaks or cracks, or is not ductile to his mind : Therefore he takes another Method, and casts the Clay into a new Form, and makes thereof another kind of Vessel, as seemed good to himself to make it. Then says God, " Lo  
 " here *Jeremiah*, thou hast an Hieroglyphick of  
 " my Providence in relation to Kingdoms and  
 " Nations ; therefore go to the People of *Israel*,  
 " and tell them in my name, that I may be  
 " justly supposed to have as much, yea vastly  
 " more right and power to dispose of them, who  
 " are but brittle and Clay Vessels of my own  
 " making, than the Potter has over his Clay.  
 " I can mend or mar, make or break them, as  
 " well as he his Vessels. But because they are  
 " endowed with thinking and immortal Souls,  
 " tell them that I shall carry it towards them  
 " accordingly ; and that therefore I will not  
 " deal with them by way of absolute Power,  
 " but my sovereign Providence shall be managed  
 " by the Rules of an exact Equity temper'd  
 " with Goodness, that the Justice of my Procedure may appear to all, and even to themselves.  
 " For, however they shall behave themselves, my  
 " design is to carry it so, *That I may be justified by all, as to the Equity of my Words and Declarations, and that I may appear to be pure and clear from any suspicion of Cruelty and Rigour when I shall judg them for their Actions.*  
 " I do therefore give them this plain Declaration of my Providence : That when at  
 " any time I threaten a Nation with destruction

*Psal. 51.4.*

*for Reformation of MANNERS.*

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“ on and ruin ; if that Nation reform and re-  
“ pent before it be too late, I will spare it and  
“ not destroy it. And on the other hand, when  
“ I bless a Nation with many and singular Mer-  
“ cies and Privileges ; if that Nation requite  
“ my kindness no otherwise than by Disobedi-  
“ ence and Rebellion, I will change the course  
“ of my Providence, and bring misery and de-  
“ solation upon them.

“ Go therefore *Jeremiah*, and tell the Men  
“ of *Judah* and Inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, that  
“ this being the settled and ordinary Law by  
“ which I govern Nations, they ought to make  
“ a wise Application thereof to themselves : For  
“ let them not plead exemption from Punish-  
“ ment upon the account of their Special Pri-  
“ vileges ; for I assure them that I design severe-  
“ ly to punish them, unless they set about a  
“ National Reformation, and turn from their  
“ evil Ways and Courses.

“ However, let them not despair when they  
“ see Miseries ready to break in upon them, as  
“ if there was no hope : for were I not desi-  
“ rous to spare them, I would not be at all this  
“ pains to shew them their Duty and Interest.  
“ Argue therefore with them further thus : O  
“ ye *Jews*, is it not an unaccountable thing, that  
“ ye should act at this rate ? It is as if a  
“ Man should choose to dwell in a parched De-  
“ sert, rather than inhabit a pleasant and irri-  
“ guate Soil : For ye have thrown off the only  
“ true God, your constant Benefactor and Pro-  
“ tector, and have worshipped lifeless and sense-  
“ less Deities, that can neither hear nor help.  
“ And instead of walking in the ways of ho-  
“ linefs and obedience, ye have broken all the

“ Fences I set you, and run into forbidden Courses. Tell them therefore that by this way they draw down misery on their own heads, to the ruin of their Country, and the making themselves the laughing-stock of the Gentiles, by forcing me to become their Enemy, and to punish them with Captivity and Desolation.

This Account of the Meaning and Scope of the first seventeen Verses of this Chapter, I thought fit to premise, which may serve as a Paraphrase upon them, and be an Introduction to the Discourse I propose to entertain you with from the words I have read.

My Text naturally divides it self into these two Parts or General Heads: First, *The Account God himself gives of the ordinary Method of his Providence in governing Nations and Kingdoms.* Secondly, *The Application of this Account to the Jews, with relation to their particular Case and Circumstances.*

## PART I.

*The Account God gives of the ordinary Method of his Providence in governing Nations and Kingdoms.*

I perceive I am got upon a large and diffused Field of Matter, where, if I take not good heed, I may both mistake my own way, and mislead the thoughts of others. Providence is a dark and mysterious Labyrinth, whose Mazes and Meanders, Turnings and Windings, none did ever yet, in all respects, successively discover and lay open: So that it seems to be the work of Christ himself and not of mere Men, the work of Eternity and not of Time, to adjust



just the many seeming Discords thereof in one great Harmony. I shall therefore venture no farther into the Recelles of this Subject, than my Text will give me leave; especially considering that I am confined to the narrow limits of one single Discourse, and that this is not the only thing I must speak to therein.

Having therefore already given you a general Idea of the meaning and scope of the Words read, I shall from thence propose to your Meditations the several Considerations of the Theocracy, or Divine Government of Nations, in some Propositions, which I shall endeavour to propose in such a Gradation of thought, that your minds may be insensibly led from one to another.

Prop. I. *As God is the Ruler of all things, so he is in a special manner the Rector of Men, whom he governs as reasonable Creatures.*

Every Effect supposes a Cause, and every Work a Workman; and therefore the Notion of Creatures involves the belief of a Creator. And a Work of such a nature as this vast and admirably contrived World, must needs lead us to this Conclusion, that the Author is infinitely wise, powerful, and good: For, as the Apostle says, *The invisible things of God, even his eternal Power and Godhead, are clearly understood by the things that are seen.* And this belief of God leads necessarily to the faith of a Providence. For surely it is as easy for an infinitely powerful and wise Being to govern as to make the World. And it is not consistent with his Goodness to suffer inferior Beings which he gave Origin unto, to be without all Government and Rule. To talk of Chance therefore as the Ma-

ker or Ruler of the Universe, is to speak words that have no sense in them. Is this Chimera we call Chance something or nothing? If nothing; can nothing be a Cause of real Effects? If something; does it act regularly or irregularly? If regularly; then it is no more Chance? If irregularly; how can it produce a regular and uniform World? Can there be more in the Effect than the Cause could impart to it? And if the uniform Course of the Sun and other Luminaries, the preservation of the Species of Creatures, and in short, the Course of Nature for five thousand years, prove not the regularity of the World, we must for ever cease to reason upon any thing in this Life. Therefore we may be assured the same God governs the World who made it; and that this *his Kingdom of Providence rulerth over all.*

Psal. 103.  
19.

And such is the Divine Goodness, that he reckons nothing which he made beneath his Care; which is no more difficult to him, than to govern any one thing, if we have any due Conception of his infinite Perfections. Hence the Scripture tells us, *That he makes his Winds blow as he pleaseth: That he gives Life or takes it away as he sees good; and that he gives food to all Creatures, Birds, Beasts, and Fishes, who all depend upon his Bounty for their provision.*

Joh. 3. 8.  
Psal. 104.  
29.  
Psal. 104.  
17, 21, 27,  
28.

But his Providence takes a more special Care of the Children of Men, whom he governs in another manner, than the inanimate or brutish part of the Creation; and disdains not to be known by the Title of, *The Preserver of Men.* For, not to pry into the unknown and invisible Orbs and Regions, he hath given this Earth to the Children of Men, and all the Creatures there-

Job 7. 20.  
Psal. 115.  
16.



in to subserve their use. But Men themselves he *Psal. 8. 6,*  
has made to be his Subjects to serve and obey *7, 8.*  
him; and therefore has brought them under a  
Law and the Sanction thereof, by promises of Re-  
wards and threatnings of Punishments, as they  
shall be found to behave themselves. And *his* *Prov. 5. 21.*  
*eyes are over them continually,* to observe their Pro- & *15. 3.*  
ceedings. So certain is this, that the Apostle  
confirms the belief of the Being of God from  
the Consideration of his Providence: Tho God, *Act. 14. 16,*  
says he, *in times past suffered all Nations to walk* *17.*  
*in their own ways;* yet he left not himself without  
witness, in that he did good, and gave us Rain  
from Heaven, and fruitful Seasons, filling our  
Hearts with Food and Gladness. And from this  
Topic the Psalmist attempts to convince wicked  
Men of the folly of their Imagination, that God  
did not mind things below, or take notice of  
their Oppression and Villany. *They break in* *Psal. 94. 5,*  
*pieces thy People, O Lord, and afflict thine Heri-* *6, 7, 8, &c.*  
*tage. They slay the Widow and the Stranger, and*  
*afflict the Fatherless: Yet they say, The Lord shall*  
*not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.*  
*Understand ye brutish among the People; and ye*  
*Fools when will ye be wise? He that planteth the*  
*Ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the Eye,*  
*shall he not see? &c.*

Prop. II. God doth not only govern Men con-  
sidered particularly and apart, but as they coalesce  
into Societies, and constitute and make up distinct  
Kingdoms and Nations.

This is so plain and perspicuous in our Text,  
that I need alledg nothing further by way of  
Probation. And what are the Kingdoms and  
Nations of this World, but so many Provinces  
under

*Kings said.*  
*Xenoph.*  
*lib. 1.*

1 Tim. 6.  
 15.

2 Chron.  
 20. 6.

under the care of a wise God, who reigns over them as Universal Monarch? If one Man sometimes has been capable to rule many and far-distant Nations, many of whom never saw him, nor expected ever to see him, and yet obeyed voluntarily, which was the Case of *Cyrus*; surely it need be thought no strange thing for God to rule all Nations. He is *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*, and all Princes and Rulers are but his Viceroys, and Officers under him, who act by his Commission, and are accountable to him for their management. *He rules over all the Kingdoms of the World, and in his hand there is Power and Might, so that none is able to withstand him; and he disposeth of all Nations as he sees good.*

And surely there is all reason that he that made the World should govern it: For he only is and can be the Sovereign thereof. And to none else can absolute Power and Authority belong; it being the highest Usurpation and Treason for any Mortal to claim this, as well as impossible that he should be possessed of it: For he that is qualified to rule absolutely, must have as a right and just Title to this Power, so also all Vertues compleat and perfect in himself, without the least Allay or Imperfection. He must be the most gracious and merciful, the most just and faithful, the most wise and knowing, the most powerful and mighty of all Beings. In a word, he must be *Optimus Maximus*, the best and the greatest. Now is there any besides the infinite God that is possessed of all these Perfections? Is there any Man that knows all things, or can do all things? is there any Man infinite or unchangeable?

For

For a Man then to make himself Absolute, is to act over again the madness of such a frantick Person as *Caligula*, who commanded all to worship him as God. And surely it must needs be the highest Madness to usurp that which he can never reach or attain: For let him do what he can, he can never make himself independent, unlimited or infinite.

And as none but God can pretend to Arbitrary Authority and Power: so no Subjects are obliged or ought to obey, meerly because it is said, *so we command you*, unless in things indifferent. For when God commands one thing, and Rulers another, we must ever follow the Apostolical Practice, and say with them, *Whether it be right in the sight of God to obey you rather than God, judg ye.* Sueton. in Vita ejus. Philo Jud. in Legatione ad eum. Act. 4. 19.

It is God then whom Kingdoms and Nations ought to obey as their Sovereign Ruler and Absolute Judg; whose Commands being sealed with a *Thus saith the Lord*, ought to be obeyed without farther Debate. It is he only who knows the Soul and its Secrets, who gives Laws to the inward as well as outward part, and executes Judgment impartially to all his Subjects.

But in a Consistency with the Laws of Reason and Revelation also, where it is superadded, all are obliged to submit to the Laws made by Men for the good of the Community. For to live without all Rule and Law is as ridiculous, as for a Man to commit himself and all he has to the impetuous Sea and its inconstant Waves, in a Ship without either Steerage, Compass, Sails or Oars. Licentiousness indeed is often mistaken for Liberty. But if it must go under that name, yet it is only a Liberty to err, to be mad and

to

## A SERMON before the Societies

to be miserable. Anarchy as it is the worst of Tyrannies, so it is a thing in vain attempted, in the full sense of the Word: For had we none in this World to be summoned before, yet there is a Law in our selves to which we are accountable; a Conscience that accuseth or excuseth us as we live and act. *Juvenal* \* therefore tells his Friend that he was not to think that those escap'd all Punishment, who were not called to an account for their Villanies by human Judicatories; for that such Mens Consciences tormented them as much as all Racks and Tortures could do.

Prop. III. *The Fundamental Law and Instrument of God's Kingdom over Men, whereby he governs them both apart and as they constitute and make up distinct Nations, is the Conception and Impression Men have of Religion as to its Principles and Obligations.*

Tho God be our Absolute Sovereign and Lord, and might thus justly require of us whatever he pleaseth; yet such is his Condescension and Goodness, that he chooseth to govern Men as free and rational Creatures, by commanding nothing but what is agreeable to their Natures, and makes for their own Interest in conjunction with his Honour. He gives therefore some notices of his Being and Beneficence to all Na-

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\* ————— Cur tamen hos ru  
Evasisse putes, quos diri conscia facti  
Mens habet attonitos, & surdo verbere cædit,  
Occursum quatiente animo tortore flagellum?  
Poena autem vehemens ac multo sævior illis,  
Quas & Cæditius gravis invenit & Rhadamanthus,  
Noste dieq; suum gestare in pectore testem.

*Juven. Sat. 13.*

tions,

tions, and thereby leads their Thoughts into the Notion and Conception of what we call Religion, impressing their Souls with Apprehensions of its main Principles and Scope: Tho in this he acts variously, leaving some to the bare conduct of Reason and Dictates of Conscience, and affording others an exprefs Revelation of his Will, and that variously also according to the Circumstances of Men in the World, and their different Capacities. But in all this he acts wisely and mercifully both, requiring no further Improvement than in proportion to the *Talents* lent: For *they that sin without the Law of an exprefs Revelation, shall be judged only by the Dictates of Reason and natural Light*: Whereas *they that sin under the Law shall be judged by it*; for there is no respect of Persons with God. Matth. 25. 15, &c. Rom. 2. 11, 12.

The Apostle gives us a brief but exact Account both of the Principles and Duties of Religion as such, abstracting from the consideration of both the Jewish and Christian Economy, in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, chap. 11. ver. 6. where he tells us, that he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek to please him. For herein he shews us the Principles, Duties and Scope of Religion in one compendious View. First, He gives an account of the Principles of Religion, which are five: The 1<sup>st</sup> is, That God is, or that there is a God. The 2<sup>d</sup> is, That God is the Ruler and Governour of Men: For this is sufficiently intimated when he is called a *Rewarder of Men*. The 3<sup>d</sup> is, That Man is a needy, dependent and accountable Creature: which is plainly imported when it



it is made his Duty here *to come to God, to seek him diligently, and to study to please him*; and in this also that God is said to be a *Rewarder of such as do so*. The 4<sup>th</sup> is, That Mens Souls are immortal, or at least that Men shall live again after Death; for otherwise God cannot be truly said to be a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him, since such Persons do often meet with the worst Treatment in this present Life. The 5<sup>th</sup>, which goes inseparably along with the preceding, is, That there is a future state to be expected, where Men will be rewarded or punished according to their deeds. In the next place, he proposes to our Consideration the Duties of Religion, which we are obliged to; viz. 1. To believe these Principles; and 2. To worship and obey God accordingly; which the Apostle expresses by the Phrases of *coming to God, and seeking him*. To which he adds the manner of worshipping and serving God truly, by commanding us to do so *diligently*. In the last place he proposes the End and Design of all Religion, which he represents as a *concern and study to please God, in order to be rewarded by him*.

This Account of Religion is such, that it leads the Mind to an easy and reasonable Account of it in the general Notion. For I cannot but hence form to my self this plain and consistent Description of it; viz. That it is a serious Concern and studious Endeavour to seek after God, and come unto him, in that way which we think will be most acceptable and pleasing to him, and consequently effectual to reach the end designed: and all this proceeding from a right apprehension, and firm belief of God's Being

Being and Beneficence, and from a just sense of our dependence upon him, and accountableness to him, and of our being designed for a future State, and consequently of our being to be rewarded or punished there, according to our Life and Behaviour here, with respect to the above-mentioned Concern and Endeavour.

And as this is the Idea we must necessarily have of Religion; so we may easily perceive hence how reasonable a thing Religion is: For supposing the former Principles (which it were easy to prove, tho I have now no time for it) is there any thing that can be supposed more rational than this? Is there an infinite, perfect and glorious Being, whom we call God (a Name that imports such a Being;) Surely then he is to be admired, lov'd, fear'd and obeyed by us. Is he our Creator, and shall not his Creatures serve him? Is he our Protector, Governor and Benefactor; and shall we not subject our selves to him, and be thankful for what he bestows upon us? Are we every way depending upon him, as to Being, Life and Action; and shall we not have our constant recourse unto him for every thing we need? Has he bestowed upon us immortal Souls, rational and free Spirits; and shall not our Souls, our Thoughts and Wills be employed for him, and in his Service? Are we to be happy or miserable hereafter, according as we live and behave our selves here in this Life; and shall we not then labour and study to act so that we may be approved and rewarded by him? So that upon the whole and entire view of all these things, we cannot but see and own, that Religion is of all things the **most** reasonable, and is therefore by the Apostle Rom. 12.1. justly called our reasonable Service. And



And surely it must be reasonable, since it was con-created with Man at first, and interwoven with his very Nature; for he was made in the Image of God. And when Religion gets again the Ascendant over the Soul, whereby this Image is renewed in us, we find it to be every way adapted to the Faculties of our Souls. Unto this the Apostle gives the Title of the *New Man*, and calls it by the name of *Knowledg*, but such a Knowledg as carries along with it *Bowels of Mercies, Humility, Kindness, Meekness, Long-suffering, and particularly Love or Charity*. And in another place he says, this *New Man or renewed Image of God*, stands in *Righteousness and true Holiness*, which is the same with the former Account. And therefore there is no ground for piecing together what the Apostle says of this in these two Epistles, as if he had given an imperfect account of it in each of these places.

Nay, there are even Vestiges of this to be traced in the degenerate Natures of unrenewed Sinners: For unless we believe Religion, and have some Notion of it, we can never sufficiently understand for what end the very Faculties of our Souls were given us. For as we have bodily Organs and Senses, whereby we are capable to converse with material and sensible things; so we have reason \* also, whereby we can think of things abstracted from Sense and

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\* ————— Separat hæc nos  
A Grege Mutorum, atq; ideo venerabile soli  
Sortiti Ingenium, Divinorumq; capaces,  
Sensum a Cœlesti demissum traximus Arce.

*Juvén. Sat. 5.*

Matter,

Matter, which the Eye never saw, nor the Ear heard of. For by this we can soar above things below; and pass beyond the boundaries of time and place. And let none say, that all this is from Education; for were there not a Faculty in us capable of discerning these things, all the teaching in the world would avail us nothing; and an Ass or Hog might be taught this as well as we. Nay, do we not experience this, that no imperfect Object can give us intire and full satisfaction? which shews us that our Souls are formed for something more noble than this World. 'Tis true, we know not even finite things perfectly; yet thus much we know of them, that they are finite and unsatisfactory. And therefore our Souls must ever remain fleeting and disquieted, without the Objects which Religion presents us with:

I might here run out into many things that this Subject would lead me into. But time allows me only to hint some few things, and forces me to pass by many others. It is from this Connaturalness of Religion to us, that we find a secret Pleasure in our being conscious to our selves that we act virtuously and well, tho we bring thereby no advantage to our selves as to this World; and that the Mind at other times is under uneasy Thoughts, from a sense of being guilty of secret Evils, when none knows of them, and when all things external go fair and smooth. Whence is it that good Men can rejoice in Tribulations and continued Troubles in this Life? And whence is it that ill Men are scar'd and tormented by the review of their own Crimes, when they are in no danger to be punished by Men? If Fears and Vexations did only haunt  
Cottages;

*A SERMON before the Societies*

Cottages, we might suppose these proceeded from the dread of temporal Punishments : but when they infest the Closets and Thrones of Princes, tho never so absolute and above human Power, they must surely have another Cause. These things assure us, that there are Rules and Laws, which have a peculiar relation to the Soul and Mind, by which it is to steer its course with respect both to a present and future Satisfaction and Happiness ; and that it has things to mind which immediately concern it self, and not the Body.

These hints may serve to shew what suitability and congruity there is between Religion and the Soul. But this will appear further if we consider what the first Principles and Sentiments of Religion are, which God has continued with all Men, more or less. And I cannot forbear to speak of these, because it is this way God chiefly takes to maintain his Government in a moral Sense over human Race.

Whatever Discrepancy there is among Nations and Persons as to their Sentiments of Religion, as well as Rites and Ceremonies ; yet still there are three things that Men have in a manner universally agreed upon in all Ages ; and are sufficient to give a tolerable Idea of Religion in general.

1. Mankind hath agreed in this, That there is a God, *i. e.* a most glorious and perfect Being, to whom we owe the most solemn Veneration and Adoration. Whatever absurd Fancies some Nations have admitted as to the Deity, yet still some belief and worship of him we find : For so strongly is this Perswasion rooted in human Nature, that Men will rather worship any

any thing, than not believe the Being of a Deity. So that the grossest Idolatries and Superstitions that ever were, are still a Proof of this Truth. And it is plain that this could not come from Collusion, mutual Intercourse, or the Tricks of Politicians, since the most barbarous Nations, the remotest Islanders, and the latest discovered Places of the World are found to agree in this general Sentiment. 'Tis true, some People are talk'd of about the *Cape of Good Hope*, and in *New Holland*, who seem to have no sort of Worship among them, and hardly any thing like Reason. But I am apt to think that their ferity and wildness occasions this not to be observed in them. They are terrified at the sight of Europeans, and therefore before them may show no signs of this. And besides, the Signs whereby they express their belief of a Deity may be so odd, that they may be easily mistaken for some other thing by those who see and observe them. But if indeed they be a Race of Idiots, we cannot expect Religion where Reason is wanting. But supposing there were Nations sunk so far below other Men as to become a kind of Brutes; this militates no more against our Assertion, as to Religion, than it does against Mens being reasonable Creatures, because we find in some places Houses fill'd with Fools and mad Men. And the same consideration shews, That our Assertion is no way weakened by reason of the monstrous Production of some Atheists in the World; if indeed there ever were any such Persons really.

2. Mankind generally agrees in this also, That there is a vast difference between Virtue and Vice. There is such a comeliness and beau-

ty in Virtue and good Actions, and such a deformity and monstrosity in Vice and Wickedness, that Men cannot but see and own the Contrariety. And therefore all sorts of People, even the most barbarous, have found it necessary to have Laws and Rules among themselves, for encouraging the one and suppressing the other. It is therefore a most unaccountable thing that there should be any Pretenders to Reason, who should tell us, that this Difference between Virtue and Vice dos not arise from the different and opposite nature of the things themselves, but from the Laws of Men, that encourage the doing one thing, and make another thing criminal. It were an easy thing to shew the monstrous Absurdity of this from several Considerations. But I shall only make one Supposition to the Gentlemen of this Opinion, if indeed they be serious in making the Objection. I suppose then that they themselves had all Power in their hands, and should attempt to make good their own Assertion by inverting all our Laws, and give out Edicts that all Men should lie, cheat, steal, ravish and destroy. Would these Crimes immediately change both Nature and Name, and become Virtues? I suppose they would soon alter their opinion, and see that Vice was Vice still, tho encouraged by Laws. All then that can be supposed to be at the bottom with these Men, is that they love to live lawless themselves. But their love of Life and respect to their Estates, will never allow them to wish that every Man had power to kill or impoverish them; tho perhaps they wish to have such Power over others themselves.

3. Mankind likewise has generally agreed in the

the belief and expectation of a future state of Happiness as the Reward of good Men, and of Misery as the Punishment of bad Men: tho the Conceptions of the Heathens were exceeding dark and confused in their Notions thereof. However their *Styx* and *Tartarus*, and their *Elysian* Fields, how fabulous soever, had their rise from this Notion. And these Accounts do confirm to us, that they had some Notion of a future State; as much as Idolatry does suppose the Belief of a Deity. And how could Men avoid this, who believed that God ruled the World in a way of Justice, and yet saw how unequally Rewards were distributed here? To reconcile these so opposite and contrary things, the Reason of Man might easily be supposed to conclude, that God would at last clear up all things according to the Rules of exactest Justice; and since that was not done in this Life, it followed that there must be another, wherein Rewards and Punishments will be dispensed to Men impartially according to their Works. And this seems to have been at least the principal Reason of their belief of this, \* of which some

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\* *M. Tul. Cic. Somn. Scipionis.* Omnibus, qui patriam conservarint, adjuverint, auxerint, certum esse in Cœlo definitum locum, ubi beati ævo sempiterno fruuntur. *Ibid.* Immo verò ii vivunt, qui ex corporum vinculis, tanquam e carcere evolverunt. *Ibid.* Justitiam cole & pietatem: — ea vita via est in Cœlum, &c. *Manil. lib. 1.*

An fortes animæ dignataq; nomina Cœlo,  
Corporibus resoluta suis, terraq; remissa,  
Huc migrant ex orbe, suumq; habitantia Cœlum,  
Æthereos vivunt annos mundoq; fruuntur.



Philosophers and Poets too seem to have no contemptible Notion.

Now seeing these things lay the foundation of a tolerable Idea of Religion in general; and since Men, generally speaking, have in all Ages and Places believed these Principles; is it possible to conceive that they who differed in almost all other things, should agree by mere chance in a common Mistake and Imposture? I grant that it is not the bare multitude of Asserters that can assure us of the truth of any thing; since sometimes the generality of Men has been found to cry up that for truth, which has at last been found to be a mistake: For a thing is not true because voted up by the Poll, but because demonstrated by Reason. But then it is to be considered, that these things wherein the generality of Men have erred at any time, have either been Facts which the Testimony of one has made many mistake in, or remoter Truths that depend upon some Subtily of Reasoning, and not fundamental and first Truths: And of such things I can only be of \* *Aristotle's* and † *Cicero's* mind, that what is believed by all is true. But in my reasoning on this Head, I have not barely made this an Argument for the verity of Religion, that most are on that side; but have also discovered that this is believed by Men, because congruous and agreeable to the universal Reason of Mankind: And if the former saying of *Aristotle* and *Cicero* be taken in this sense, I look upon it to be as certain a Maxim as any in the World, or otherwise we have no foundation of certainty at all.

These

\* "Ο πάντων δοκῶν ὅτι ἐστὶν ἀληθὲς. *Arist.*

† Quod omnibus videtur, est. *Cic.*



These things being thus laid down, lead our Minds insensibly to see the Truth of the Proposition : For whatever way God influenceth the Minds of Men to apprehend these, whether by Impressions from himself, or by a natural tho occult Derivation from Parents by generation, in the same way that the same Tempers and Dispositions are communicated to them ; or whether he doth this by giving hints of these things to the minds of Men by the secret Voice of Angelical Messengers, or only by traditional Conveyance and Converse with others, and our improving our own Reasons from thence by considering and laying together things represented to us by our Senses : I say, whether God affords Men Notices and Principles by all these ways, or any of them ; still I am satisfied there is such an universal Notion and Belief of Religion. And this being supposed, we must needs conclude, That this must be the great Law and Instrument of God's governing Men, since he must govern them according to their Natures. And it were easy to shew that it is no more the essential Property of Man to be a reasonable Creature, than it is to be a religious one ; and I believe it is more difficult to prove that Brutes have nothing of Reason, than that they have nothing like Religion.

But I cannot forbear giving my thoughts some further Scope on this Head, by hinting to you how these Principles, and the Notion and Belief Men have of Religion do exert themselves. Some things there are which spring from the above-mentioned Principles of Religion, which, if rightly improved, do exceedingly tend to promote Godliness ; and which the wise Rector of Men

makes great use of in the Government of the World. But before I propose these, I must premise this one Consideration; that the Voice and Desire of Nature is a quite different thing from that of Vice and Lust: For Corruption of Mind differs as much from its natural Constitution, as sickness dos from health of Body. A Man in Sickness may long for things hurtful; but Nature left to it self, and not suppress'd, has a desire only to things innocent and good.

Now there are two sorts of Desires or Appetites in the Souls of Men; which I shall choose to call by the Designation of *Primary* and *Secondary* ones; because the first sort are more clearly the Product of the Remains of Religion in Mens Nature: Whereas the *second* seem at first view to arise wholly from Corruption and vicious Habits of Mind; which yet we may trace further, even to the rational Faculties of our Souls, tho they run thro these as vitiated in their Acting, and so bear the Impression of the same Obliquity.

The *Primary* Affections, Desires, and Appetites, which speak forth the Remain of Religion in the Soul to be their Original, and which God makes great use of in the Government of Men, and which likewise tend naturally, where they are improved, to promote Virtue and Piety, and the good of Nations: These primary Desires, I say, are chiefly these following; which I can only just propose as Hints to be dilated and stretch'd out by your own Meditations. The First is, The Love that naturally all Men have to what is noble, excellent, valuable and good. Wisdom, Justice, Goodness, Love, Kindness and Faithfulness, are  
such

such ravishing things, that wherever they are found or supposed to be, they force delight in us, and admiration and respect from us; especially where they are found in Perfection. When therefore we have any true Idea of the Divine Perfections, we are unavoidably prompted to admire, love and adore God. The Reason therefore that Men are not more universally taken with these things, as represented by Religion, is not because they hate such things; but because they will not allow themselves to believe that Religion is possessed of these good things, as being intoxicated with the love of imaginary Perfections, which run counter to these Realities, which Religion proposes as the only excellent things, condemning at the same time those fancies that such Men doat upon. The Second is, The Propension and secret Wish that naturally arises in our Souls, That we might be so happy as to have a Friend that might be universally useful to us; one who could infallibly direct us in all things, who would be loving, kind, and sympathizing, would be so faithful that we might intirely confide in him, who were capable to make us happy every way, and who could be subject to no Passion, Humour, or Change. Now a Friend thus perfect is but another Name for God; and therefore this seems to be the very breathing of Nature after him, pointing to God as the Needle in the Compass to the North Pole. And is it not madness then, for Atheists to laugh at those who believe God is, at the same time they wish there were such a one? I might take occasion here to shew, that it is no small proof that God is, to see that it is the universal Wish of human Nature at bottom, that such a one were:

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For this supposes some Conception of a God. And how is it possible that any finite Being should forge the Idea of an infinite One, if God himself did not impart this as far as we are made capable to receive it? For without this, we cannot solve the Difficulty by a traditional Conveyance: For who gave it to that Man that imparted it to me; and who again to him? &c. Besides, tho our mixed Notions may be false, as we may conceive a Mountain of Gold, tho it be not, by putting two very different Notions together without reason; yet the simple Notions, of which mixt ones are composed, must, I conceive, be true; or otherwise we could have no Conception of them: For I cannot understand how the Glass of the Mind should form the Idea of simple Beings that are not, any more than a Mirror can receive and express the Image of what is not before it. But that I may not digress too far, I shall only say further, that I look upon God as a necessary Being, and am of *Bradwardin's* mind, who somewhere \* proves, that it is impossible for God not to exist. The third Appetite and Desire of the rational Nature is, To be immortal. Life is so noble a Blessing, that without it we can enjoy no other. And hence, even those who believe not a future Life, or the Souls Immortality, do

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\* O quam necesse est Deum esse! Qui si non esset, nihil esset verum, nihil esset falsum, nihil esset necessarium, nihil esset contingens, nihil esset possibile, nihil esset impossibile. O quam necesse est Deum esse, quem impossibile est non esse! *Bradwardinus de Causa Dei contra Pelag.*

still

still wish that this Life were perpetual. And *Felo's de se* prove nothing against this, being justly lookt upon by all Men to be in a fit of madness when they do so. The Action of *Caro* and some other brave Heathens say less against this: because they believed a future state and the Soul's immortality. And least of all can any argue against this from the desires of *Paul* and other good Men to die, and of the primitive Christians Thirst after Martyrdom: for all these had respect to a future Life and eternal Rewards; even as Christ himself *for this end endured the Cross, and despised the shame.*

As for the poor Atheist, he stands here by himself alone: whose miserable comfort is to hope doubtfully (for he can never be certain) that he shall ever be without sense of misery; *i. e.* without comfort also. But as it is highly improbable to imagine that the most noble part of Man should be brought into a state of non-entity, when even the Body is not so, tho dissolved; so I question not but all unprejudic'd Thinkers will conclude that this universal wish to be immortal, renders the sentiment of a future state highly reasonable. A fourth Appetite of the reasonable Nature is, a desire after Happiness, or a Life free from Vexation and Trouble. None can possibly deny this who is not a stranger both to himself and others. All Men love ease, joy, peace and comfort: and these Religion not only represents, but makes offer of. And all Men naturally hate sorrow, vexation, trouble and misery: and these Religion offers to free us totally from hereafter, and to prevent in a great measure and alleviate here. It has indeed such respect to the dignity of human nature,

ture, as well as its Interest, that it restrains us from unmanly, brutish and hurtful pleasures. It does with us, as we do with Children, whom we keep from drinking Poison tho pleasant to the tast, and from playing with Serpents, tho their skins appear fine. All the quarrel then that Men can pretend against Religion is, because it defers our joys too long. But besides that Religion is accompanied even here with many advantages and pleasures; the excellency and reasonableness of Religion is seen in this very thing: for it ascertains us of unmixed joy as soon as we shall be ripe for it. If a Patient demand to go abroad into the fields, when he is not able to raise his head from the pillow without trouble: shall we quarrel with the Physician, for telling him mildly that he shall be allowed so to do, as soon as the rage of the Distemper is abated, and he in case to walk abroad?

Lo here a Specimen of the *primary* Desires and Appetites of Men, which God makes use of as so many handles to turn the Acts of their mind in what Channel he pleaseth, and thereby also their Lives and Conversations, Studies and Employments. But there are others of a worse name and character, which perhaps are no less, yea often more and more immediately made use of in the Conduct of the World and the Government of Nations. For the wise Rector of Men knows how to subserve himself by the worst of Instruments, and to carry on his designs by the very things that we would think tend to oppose and frustrate the same. *He makes the wrath and humours of Men to praise him. Things that are great and mighty he brings down*



down by things that are mean and despised ; nay even by things that are not, but are merely Chimerical and Imaginary. And such a thing is Honor, which tho it be often but a vain Phantom, has yet been the occasion of doing the greatest things that History has to speak of. This and the other *secondary* and derivative Appetites of Men, tho blended with Vice, so as often to deserve to come under no other *Genus*, are yet such, that a wise Man will be forc'd to trace their Original to the very rational and immortal Nature of the Soul, even tho they appear coloured with purulent and fœtid streams from the Dunghil of Corruption, wherewith our Nature since the Fall is clog'd, and in a great measure stopt up. And since I mentioned Honour just now, let that be the first thing to be considered under this Head ; All Men have an itch to be honoured and esteemed, from the Prince to the Peasant. There is none so mean spirited, but he has an ambition to be valued in his way. This inspires even Tradesmen and Artisans to spend so many years in learning the Grounds and Rules of their several Occupations ; not only to get Bread, but to excel, if possible, in their several stations : for who is there that is not ashamed to be accounted an *Ignoramus* in his Profession ? But this is more eminently seen in Soldiers, who leave their Friends and Country, endure fatigues, rush into seen dangers, bear up under hardships, and run the risk of their life almost continually ; and all this in hopes to get honor, and to be raised to some Post where they may be more taken notice of, and live in more esteem : in the mean time comforting themselves that if they die, it is in the field of glory and  
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bed of Honor. Such a Thirst after Honor in *Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander and Caesar*, God made use of to new-model the World four several times. And in short, all the great Actions of the fam'd Hero's of the World, have mov'd very much on this Hinge. See then how easily God can govern the World by this one thing. An Ambition and Thirst after the Honor to be great, has inspir'd a mighty Prince to destroy his Neighbours and oppress his Subjects. And a laudable and noble Ambition to be great in Goodness, has inspir'd a greater Soul'd Monarch to stop him in his career, and to unplume him of this his airy feather, to the security and peace of many Nations, as well as his own real Glory. Now whence does this desire of Honor spring up in the Souls of Men? surely from one of the first Principles of Religion, viz. a just height of Spirit, to act agreeably to our nature, not to stoop to unmanly things, and what are beneath us, but to aspire to the Esteem and Approbation of God, to seek his Honor, and that which those that honour him may expect from his Goodness upon so doing. This we may trace even in the most crooked and sinister courses that some Men take. But we may find it illustriously display'd in the gallant and truly noble performances of the Servants of God; *Who thro faith subdued Kingdoms, wrought Righteousness, obtained Promises, kept the mouths of Lyons, quench'd the violence of the fire, escap'd the edg of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight Armies of Aliens.* The second thing of this sort, which I would mention, is akin to the former; and it is Desire of Fame. How great

Heb. II.  
33, 34.

great things has this also inspired Men to do? To this it is owing, that we have so many of the Writings of learned Men. To this we are oblig'd for the Account we have of the Inventors of Arts, as well as for the Invention of them; for the Account Histories have preserv'd to us of the great Men of Antiquity, as well as their great Actions; and for the Structures and famous Monuments, that continue to be the wonder still of these last Ages. The Pyramids of *Egypt* and the rest of the wonders of the World, and the Monuments of old *Greece* and *Rome*, as well as the late Atchievements in Architecture, Sculpture, Limning, Ingravings and Statuary, do owe their several Productions to this thing we call Fame. And whence does this proceed but from the immortal Nature of the Soul, or from an immortal desire to be known to future Ages? If some have destroyed Temples, and laid waste Countreys from hence: yet still we may trace the Principle thro' the irregularity of the means Men have made use of to reach this end. A third thing that I would consider is Covetousness, and an unsatiable Desire of acquiring Riches. This likewise has a mighty influence in the Government of the World: since from hence the Strength and Security of Nations in Peace, and their Sinews and Atchievements in War do very much proceed. I know there is nothing more contrary to the spirit of Religion than this, as Religion is truly displayed in Scripture, especially the New Testament, where *Covetousness* is called *Idolatry*. But this does not hinder the wise God from making use of this unruly Passion for wise ends, as Experience convinceth us he doth.

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Therefore if we allow our selves to consider the Original of this, we shall find, that however depraved a Principle it be now, yet its first Original is the most noble that can be. For it proceeds from no less a Principle than that of Self-preservation; whereby we are obliged to seek after all those things that tend to our Good and real Advantage. Only Men, by reason of Sin, mistaking the things wherein their real Good doth stand, have sottishly fallen into a gross Notion of placing it in things transitory and vain, instead of truly valuable and permanent enjoyments. The fourth and last thing I shall mention under this Head, is the irregular desire of Knowledge we call Curiosity. By this all Arts and Sciences have been cultivated and arrived to that degree of Perfection they are at this day come to. Now, tho this may run to an excess, yet it is easie to trace its Original. For the improvement and cultivation of our Understandings is certainly one of the principal Duties of Reasonable Creatures. But this is our weakness, that since the Fall, instead of minding the grand Concerns of our Souls, and what tends to make us wiser and better Men, we are apt to mispend our time and exhaust our Spirits in studying things of little or no use. Yet this mistaken Improvement of Reason, the wise God makes use of for most noble ends; so as to make great and excellent Discoveries arise from these Studies, otherwise barren and useles: as appears plainly from the advantages that Divinity it self has received from the Critical, Chronological and Topographical Discoveries of curious Men, as well as from the Improvements that Mechanical Employments have had

had of late from the Cultivation of the Mathematicks.

What I have said in all this, lets us see that Religion is not only the Fundamental Law and Instrument whereby God governs Men apart, but as they join together and make up Societies and Nations: For if Religion be so interwoven with our Natures, that the main Principles of it are universally owned and believ'd; and if the Appetites and Desires of the Soul run in this Channel, even when Men think little of this matter; then certainly we must conclude, that the thing which is so natural to all the Individuals which compose Societies, must be necessary to them also as united in Society. But lest some may not be able to see the full force of this Reasoning, I shall propose some Considerations, which will prove this directly and immediately.

And, 1<sup>st</sup>. Religion must be necessary to the well-being of Nations, because it makes Men avoid those things which disturb all human Societies; such as Lying, Cheating, Slandering, Violence, Thefts, Murders, Lewdness, Rioting, Drunkenness, and Rebellions: for it is plain, that it is only from the want of Religion that Men run into these things; whereas when Religion gets the Ascendant over any, they immediately abandon these Vices and Sins.

2<sup>dly</sup>. Religion therefore is necessary to the Peace and Prosperity of Societies, because it is the Spring and Original of all virtuous and noble Actions, and regular living: For this makes Men sober and harmless, honest and plain, rational and considerate; in short, good Citizens and Country-men, because good Men and Christians. For how is it possible, that he that gives

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up himself wholly to God and Christ sincerely and truly, should be as sensual, revengeful, ambitious, covetous, and in sum, as wicked as others?

- 3dly. Religion must be necessary to the good of Nations, because by it the very Pillars of all rightly constituted Governments are supported. Now the Pillars of Societies on which their Happiness and Security lean, are chiefly these four, viz. Union, Order, Justice, and Diligence; and certainly there is nothing tends so much to promote these as Religion. For, 1. Is not this the chief Incentive to Love and Union? tho many in this, as well as in other things, walk contrary to its Maxims: For has not Joh. 13. 35. Christ said, *By this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another?* And doth not the Apostle command, that wherein Phil. 3. 16. *we are agreed, we should walk by the same Rule, and mind the same things, as the way to understand without prejudice the things wherein we differ, and in order to be blest of God with further Light and Love?* So that it is not the having but the wanting Religion, even in many that pretend much to it, that makes them so far contradict this Rule and Example, to the hazard of the Publick Peace as well as their own, since Nations divided into Factions are in danger of ruin. 2. Religion encourageth good Order among Men; for by it we are taught to 1 Cor. 7. 10. *abide in the Calling wherein we are in* Providence Rom. 13. 7. *plac'd; to give Honour to Magistrates to whom it is due; to obey spiritual Rulers also; and to be Heb. 7. 17. & 13. 5. content with what we have, and not to envy others.* In a word, Relative Duties are largely inculcated thereby, in order to carry rightly to all  
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sorts of Men, as Superiors, Inferiors, or Equals, under all the Circumstances of Relation and Obligation, and of Sex, Age and Quality.

3. And surely there is nothing which is more the Result of genuine Piety, than Justice and Faithfulness in our Stations. For he that commands Piety, requires Justice and Mercy to our Neighbours in the same breath. Nay, our Saviour recommends this so much, that not content to say in one place, that the Law and the Prophets did all lean upon these two great Principles, to Love God, and our Neighbours as our selves; he adds in another, that all the Law and the Prophets might be comprehended in this one Rule, To do to others as we would have them do to us.

Mic. 6. 8.

Mat. 22.

37. 39.

Mat. 7. 12.

4. And is not Religion the great Incentive and Motive to Diligence? for hereby we are taught to learn and profess \* honest Trades, and to provide things honest in the sight of all Men, and to be diligent in our business and particular Callings, and not to be slothful therein; for that if we work not, neither ought we to eat.

Rom. 12.

17, & 12.

2 Thess. 3.

19.

4thly. Nay, let me add this also, that without this Societies cannot possibly subsist: For take away Religion and all the Obligations it lays us under to Love, Peace, Charity, Justice and Truth, and all things must immediately run into Confusion and Ruin: For this would overturn all Government, Settlement and Society it self, and reduce Men into Hobbs his State of

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\* Tit. 4. 14. The scope of the Apostle in this place, as well as the words, induceth me to render it as it is in the Margin of our Bibles: And I take it to be a parallel Expression with Paul's words, Acts 20. 34. 35.

War, where Men act as the wild Beasts of the Desert, fight and kill one another, as their greater Strength or Cunning would give them opportunity. Now if Atheistical Gentlemen find this too nice and tender a Point to be intrusted with the Vulgar, but chuse rather to keep it a Mystery (tho they ridicule other Mysteries;) why then do they tax Church-men and Religious Persons with Hypocrisy and cheating the common People? For, as *where there is no Law, there is no Transgression*; so there is no Hypocrisy, no Cheat, no Sin, where there is no Religion.

Rom. 4. 15.

*5thly.* The necessity of Religion in order to the well-being of the World, appears from the very Practice of those who declaim most against it, who are forced to have recourse to something else in lieu of it, that Confusion in the World may be prevented. This is plain from their owning the necessity of Order and Government: For otherwise, why do they not plead for Mens being exempted from human Laws, as well as from the Laws of Religion? For what Benefit or Liberty have Men by being taught to despise the Laws of Religion, if still they be kept in awe by the Authority of Rulers? If we must be under Restraints, why does the Atheist find fault with those of Religion? Or, if he would have us to be under no Restraints, why does he reckon human Laws necessary? especially seeing without Religion no Restraints can be binding: For it is this alone that can give Law to the Mind, and bind Men by the Obligations of their own Consciences, even the greatest, who fear not human Laws. So that to this Legislators are beholden that their Laws

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are obey'd, and even Atheists themselves, that they have Security as to Life and Estate.

And now, I hope, by this time I have sav'd my self the trouble of giving a formal Answer to the usual Objections that Atheists make against Religion.

Whereas therefore it is a common saying with such Men, that all Religion is but Cheat and Hypocrisy, I hope I have said enough to prove the contrary. I shall therefore only add this further, That Hypocrisy supposeth the Verity of Religion. For can that which never was be counterfeited? Or, can there be a Hypocrite, if there never was a religious and vertuous Man? This is as impossible, as to talk of counterfeiting Coins and Medals, that neither are nor ever were. Therefore I conclude, that were not Religion the most excellent thing in the World, it would never be made the most specious pretence for Evil: under the counterfeit Stamp of the pretended Authority whereof ill Men think to perpetrate Wickedness the more securely.

Again; Whereas some Men have pretended that Religion is the great cause of all the Confusions and Troubles that Nations, and Societies fall under: I think I have said enough to shew the falsity of this, for they are the very Opposites thereof that give Birth to these. It is Idolatry and Superstition, Atheism and Infidelity, Ambition and Covetousness, Inhumanity and Malice: These, I say, are the things that lay Cities and Countries waste, that overturn Kingdoms and Commonwealths, and that prompt Men to shed innocent Blood, and butcher those that differ from them. Let either Papists or

Protestants pretend what they will, if they shall be found to force Men into their Opinions by Fire, Sword and Dragooning, by Inquisitions, Gallies and Massacres,, or by Fines, Imprisonment and Banishment, or any other species of Persecution: All sober and good Men who have their Eyes in their Heads, must look upon them as Godless and Irreligious Men; who, to all their other Vices, have a monstrous share of Impudence, when they are not ashamed to father such Villanies on the meek and blessed Jesus, and his excellent Institution of Religion:

Jan. 3. 17. For Christianity is first pure, then peaceable,  
 Jee v. 14, 15, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy

16. and good Works, without Hypocrisy, and without Partiality. It breaths nothing but Truth and Love, Beneficence and Kindness, Mercy and universal Charity, Purity and Innocence. Can Men be ill because they love and adore Infinite Goodness, and study to bear its Image in being good, and doing good? Can the loving our Neighbours as our selves occasion us to hate and abuse them? Or, can they who study to render to all what is their due, Honour to whom Honour, and Obedience to whom Obedience; I say, can this make Men factious, rebellious and seditious? He that can believe these things, there is no Contradiction but he may swallow afterwards.

And now, I suppose, I have fully proved the Proposition I laid down. For if Religion be thus natural to Men; if the main Principles thereof be acquiesced in generally; if such are the Inclinations and Desires of Mens Souls, that they run in this Channel whether they will or not; and if this thing we call Religion be absolutely

necessary

necessary to the Peace and Welfare of Societies; I say, if these things be thus, then surely God, who rules all things according to the Natures and Principles he has given them, must be supposed to make use of this as the great Law and Instrument of his Kingdom over Men. But this will be still plainer by what we are to say further, as to God's dealing with Men as they improve or abuse the Principles of Religion he gives them.

In the mean time, this Argument for the Truth of Religion results from what I have said, the force of which, I think, no Man can put by, *viz.* That a thing which is so agreeable to the very nature and faculties of our Souls, which all Men agree in the general Notion and Belief of the Principles of, which the natural Desires of the Soul tend towards, and which Societies and Mens Safety cannot subsist without: that, I say, a thing which in all these respects is so necessary and reasonable, must be a great Reality and Truth, and must therefore be believed actually to be. And that this is the case with Religion, I think I have proved. Not that I pretend to have discoursed fully on this great Head, which had been impossible to perform in so short a time, and improper for the occasion: Only what \* others have said more largely on this Head, I have given such an ac-

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\* See Grotius de Verit. Rel. Christ. Scillingst. Orig. Sacr. Baxter's Reasons of the Christ. Faith. Wilkins of Natural Religion. Willon's Discourse of Religion. Parker of the Law of Nature and Christ. Relig. Nye's Discourse of Natural and Revealed Relig. Gastrell of Religion in general. Jaquelot de L'Existence de Dieu.

## A SERMON before the Societies

count of, as may satisfy unprejudic'd Persons, and give some distinct Idea of Divine Providence in the Government of Men and Nations, in order to lay a Foundation for the succeeding part of our Discourse.

Prop. IV. *That Kingdoms and Nations, in the ordinary course of God's Providence, are dealt with in proportion to the Knowledge which they have of Religion, and their Practice thereof; and are therefore blest or curst, raised or ruined, as they are vertuous or wicked, more or less.*

We have made some Inquiry into the Fundamental Law of God's Government over Men; and we are now to consider how God doth put this in Execution. It is a vain thing to give Laws to Men if they are at liberty to break them, without fear of being called to an account. But we may be sure, whatever neglect there may be this way in human Governments, the righteous Judg of the whole Earth will do justly: For this is his declared Rule and Maxim of Government; *He that honours me, shall be honoured by me; but he that despiseth me, shall be lightly esteemed.*

Gen. 18. 25.  
1 Sam. 2.  
30.

But I am not to consider here the Methods of Divine Providence in relation to particular Persons, but with respect to Communities, or Nations. My Text runs only upon this Head, and therefore I was willing to confine my self to it in the Proposition I am now upon.

I assert that God deals thus with Nations in the ordinary course and tenor of his Providence, that I might cut off all Quarrels and Debates about his Power absolutely considered; and because I was willing to be modest in expressing my



my Thoughts of so nice and mysterious a Subject as this of Providence is; tho had I expressed my self without this limitation, I had not thought I had undertaken a Subject too hard to be defended. For whatever may be said with respect to God's Conduct of particular Persons, in afflicting good Men, and prospering the wicked for some time, of which we are certain from Experience and Matter of Fact; yet we must remember that the case of Communities is vastly different in this particular: For God's Procedure with respect to the Miseries of good Men, and Prosperity of ill Men, may be salved by a reference to a future State: Whereas we must have a very gross Notion of things, if we imagine that Human Societies, as such, have the like relation to another World.

I suppose it might justly be thought needless labour formally to prove what I have laid down in this Proposition. For, besides that it is the native Conclusion of what has been already said, and must be therefore true, if the Premises be so; my Text is such a Proof of it, as renders all others superfluous: For from this it is plain, that *Righteousness exalteth a Nation*, Prov. 14. and that *Sin not only is its shame, but tends also* 34. *to its Ruin.*

And there is such a natural, and as it were, necessary Connexion between Vertue and Peace, and between Vice and Vexation, that shews us the Reasonableness of this Supposition. As the prudent and wise Carriage of a Man tends to bring his Affairs into order, and Incogitancy and Dissoluteness to run them into Confusion: so a wise Regulation in a Nation tends to its Settlement, and the contrary Practice to its Ruin.

Ruin. When we see a Man give himself up to Intemperance, and all manner of Impiety, we conclude that both his Estate, Body and Mind must suffer by so doing. And surely it is as reasonable to suppose, that Publick Corruptions and Mal-administration must tend to the Detriment of the Nation, as to its Security and Peace.

From whence we may justly conclude, that as God can be said in no sense to be the Author of Mens Sins; so neither can he be said, in a rigid sense, to be the Cause of their Misery: He is the Efficient indeed of what they suffer, but not the Cause that they do suffer. He is the Author of their Punishment, as the Judg is of the Execution of the Malefactors. whom he passeth Sentence against, declaring that he finds such Persons have done that which makes them incur the Penalties of the Law. Therefore it is said

Psal. 9. 16. that *the Sinners Hands make the Snares by which*  
 Prov. 5. 22. *they are caught.* And God tells the Jews, in the  
 Jer. 18. 15, words following our Text, *That the tendency of*  
 16. *their Sins was, to make their Land desolate and*  
 Psal. 7. 12, *a perpetual hissing.* For if a Man will not turn to  
 13, 16. *God and obey him, he prepares the Instruments of*  
*Death against him: which is only to return his*  
*Mischief upon his own Head, and his violent deal-*  
*ing on his own Pate.*

I might here illustrate the Proposition, from the account History hath given us of the Punishment of Nations, particularly the famous Monarchies of the World. For it was the height of Wickedness that broke the Force and Power of both the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian and Roman Empires: God made the very Luxury and Wickedness of those puissant Nations their Scourge and Plague, and afterwards their Destruction.

struction. Even \* *Juvenal* in his time observ'd this with respect to *Rome*. God would not destroy *Pharaoh* and his People till their Wickedness and Obstinacy was come to the utmost height: Nor would he cut off the *Canaanites* until their Cup of Wickedness was full, that Justice could stay no longer. Therefore the method that Satan has ever taken to bring Destruction upon a People, is to destroy their Morals, and render them universally profane and wicked; for this way he throws them out from the Divine Protection. When the Sorcerer *Balaam* could not prevail against *Israel* by his Incantments, he fell upon this devilish method of corrupting and profaning them, by enticing them to Idolatry and Lust through the means of Midianitish Women. And to this purpose may be applied the Counsel that † *Cresus* gave to *Cyrus*, in order to keep the Lydians in perpetual Subjection to him, which was, that he should bring in amongst them soft Arts and effeminate Customs: And therefore it was with a great deal of reason, that ‖ *Plato* tells us, that a City was not safe neither by its Walls, nor Fleets, nor many Inhabitants, nor Bigness, without Vertue: but that Vertue alone was a greater Defence to it than all these.

Gen. 15.  
16.

Numb. 25.  
1, 2. & ch.  
31. 16.

\* *Juven. Sat. 6.*

Nunc patimur longæ pacis mala: sævior armis  
Luxuria incubuit, victumq; ulciscitur orbem.

† *Herodot. Clio. cap. 145. p. 64, 65.*

‖ *Plat. Alcibiad. 1. ΣΩ. οὐκ ἀπὸ τείχων, ἢ δὲ τειρήρων, ἢ δὲ νεωσίων δέονται αἱ πόλεις, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τῆς ἀλλοιότητος, εἰ μέλλουσιν εὐδαιμονῆσαι, ἢ δὲ πλῆθους ἢ δὲ μεγέθους, ἀνευ ἀρετῆς, &c.*

But

But he that will be at the pains to consider the sacred History of the holy Scriptures, will see the Truth of our Proposition to be no less than a Demonstration.

The Rule of Providence which our Text tells us of, was settled even in Paradise it self; for it was founded upon the Relation that Man stood in to God as his Creator, Benefactor and Sovereign: Therefore God assured *Adam*, that  
 Gen. 2.16, 17. as he should continue happy if he continued obedient; so if he turned Rebel against him, he would certainly punish him for so doing. And therefore when he basely revolted from his God and King, tho the Threatning was not executed in its full force, through the Divine Mercy interposing, yet he was punished in being made mortal, and liable to many Miseries, and having the  
 Gen. 3.17, 18, 19. very Earth cursed for his sake.

When the Antediluvian World revolted from their Obedience to God, and his Institutions,  
 Gen. 6.3, 6, 7, 13. so that the Contagion became universal, God brought a Flood upon them, and swept them off the Earth: Yet he bare long with them, and gave them warning of his Design both by the  
 Gen. 6. 3. preaching of *Noah*, and the building of the Ark, for an hundred and twenty Years. So that he shewed his Mercy and Justice both in this Procedure, as well as in preserving the only righteous Family then upon Earth, that this way human Race might still be continued. And in  
 Gen. 18.20, 21, 30. like manner God destroy'd *Sodom*, and its Neighbouring Cities, after he had declared he would have spared them had there been but ten righteous Persons therein. His Mercy, as  
 \* *Salvian* says, was ready to save the City, but  
 \* *Salvian* says, the Inhabitants were not fit to be saved, and there-  
 de Gubern. Dei. lib. 1.

therefore Justice took place in them, and Mercy in the preservation of *Lor.*

When Idolatry and Wickedness began to prevail universally in the World after the Flood, God would not destroy them any more as he had done before by the Deluge, but chose another way to reclaim them from their evil Courses; or if that would not do, to leave them inexcusable. Therefore he chuses *Abraham* out of the rest of the degenerate World, and makes of him a great Nation: And this Nation he takes to himself as a peculiar Inclosure, giving them Laws, preserving and settling them in a conquer'd Country in the face of the whole World; setting them thus as a lofty Beacon upon an Hill, to keep up the Knowledg and Service of himself in the World: And therefore \* *Philo* the Jew says, That *Moses* when he gave Laws to *Israel* of old, did not only design the good of that People, but the benefit also of all Mankind. And *Moses* himself says much the same.

Deut. 4. 8,  
7, 8.

I might expatiate here upon the many Blessings promised to *Israel*, if they should continue obedient, and the many Curses threatned against them if they did prove rebellious. And I might show thro the whole History of that People given us in the Old Testament, how exactly these were fulfilled: But this would swell this Dis-

See Deut.  
28. and  
2 Chron.  
7. 12, &c.

\* *Philo* Jud. Περὶ Φιλανθρωπίας. Τάτο δὲ μέλ-  
σα βέλεται διὰ πάσης νομοθεσίας ὁ ἱερώτατος προ-  
φήτης κατασκευάζειν ὁμόνοιαν, κοινωνίαν ὁμοφροσύνην,  
κράσιν ἡδῶν, ἐξ ὧν, οἰκίαι καὶ πόλεις, ἄθνη τε καὶ χαῖραι,  
καὶ τὸ σὺμπαν πῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος εἰς τὴν ἀνωτάτω  
προβέβηκεν εὐδαιμονίαν.

course

course into a Volume; and therefore I leave the Prosecution of this to your own thoughts. This you will find runs thro' the whole Annals of that People, that when they were obedient to God, who was their King in a peculiar respect, God did ever prosper them; but when they rebell'd against him, he ever punished them. Was it not their Apostacy and Sin, that weakened their Hands, and strengthened their Enemies to subdue and conquer them? Was it not upon this account that God is said to have sold them and given them over to the Will and Power of their Neighbours? So that sometimes the *Moabites* and *Ammonites*, sometimes the *Philistines* and *Syrians*, and sometimes the *Egyptians* and *Babylonians* prevailed over them. I cannot forbear, upon this Occasion, to give you the Jewish Paraphrase upon the 29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>, and 31<sup>st</sup> Verses of the 32<sup>d</sup> Chapter of *Deuteronomy*; without debating whether their sense of the 31<sup>st</sup> Verse, or that of our Version, from which it differs so much, be the truer. O if Israel would understand and study the Law, then should they understand what would be in the end! When the Israelites did observe the Law and keep the Precepts, one of them was able to chase a thousand, and two of them to put ten thousand to flight. But because they sinned and provok'd God to anger, he gave them over into the hand of their Enemies: For the Confidence of the Gentiles is not like our Confidence: For because we have sinned and displeased God, our Enemies are become our Judges.

But he that would carry this Point to the utmost, needs but consider God's casting off the ten Tribes, and then look forward to the Captivity of the Jews; and when he finds them returned

Targum  
Hierosol.  
in Loc.



turned into their own Land, pursue the thread of their History down to our Saviour's time, and from thence to the Destruction of their City and Temple under *Vespasian*, and the succeeding Calamities of that People, particularly in *Hadrian's* time, and their unsuccessful Attempt to rebuild their Temple under *Julian*, with what they have met with since, and are at this day; and then surely he will see this Rule of Divine Providence illustriously display'd and made good in every step of God's Procedure with them. I could not but take notice of what I find the opinion of the Jews, in a Book of one of their Rabbies\*; where he says, That Hatred to Men did overturn their second Temple, as Idolatry and open Profaneness did destroy the first. Had the Jew added, their malicious rejecting of Christ, and pursuing him to death, he had reach'd the truth more fully.

Were it not that this point is so clear and perspicuous from all these things, I might bring many Instances of God's Procedure with other Nations, both of old and in later times, to illustrate this point further. The Instance of God's Carriage in relation to *Niniveh* doth exceedingly illustrate what I have been saying. The Threatning seem'd to be absolute, and no less than an irreversible Decree: *Yet forty Days and Niniveh shall be destroyed*; which made *Joh. 3. 4.* *Jonah* so peevish and fretful, as supposing that all Men for the future would take him for a false Prophet. And it is plain the Ninivites understood him so; for they go only upon a Suppo-

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\* Rabbi Abrah. Jagel Catech. Jud. Pag. 27. Edit. Lond. 1679.

sition that perhaps God might not inflict what  
 Ver. 9. *Jonah* assured them of: *Who can tell, say they,*  
 10. *if God may turn and repent, that we perish not?*  
 But when God saw that they turned from their  
 evil way, he remembered the settled Rule of his  
 Providence towards Nations, mentioned in our  
 Text, and he repented of the evil that he said  
 he would do unto them, and he did it not: For,  
 as he tells *Jonah*, if he had pity on the Gourd,  
 there was certainly more reason to pity so po-  
 pulous a City as *Niniveh* was.

Besides, is not the History of all, but especially  
 Christian Nations, a constant proof and illustrati-  
 on of this Point. What overturned the famous  
 Asiatic Churches but Sin, as they are loudly warned  
 and threatned in the second and third Chapters  
 of the Revelation? Was it not this that brought  
 in the Saracens and Turks upon the Eastern  
 Parts of the Roman Empire, and the Goths and  
 Vandals upon the Western Parts of it? Let any  
 Man read \* *Salvian* upon this Subject, and he

\* Transcenderunt in Hispaniæ terras Populi Vanda-  
 lorum: mutata quidem est fors Hispaniæ, sed non mu-  
 tata viciositas. — Circumsonabant armis muros  
 Carthaginiæ Populi Barbarorum: & Ecclesia Carthagi-  
 nensis insaniebat in Circis, luxuriabat in Theatris: alii  
 foris jugulabantur, alii intus fornicabantur: pars plebis  
 erat foris captiva hostium, pars intus captiva vitio-  
 rum. Cujus fors pejor fuit, incertum est. — Vi-  
 di ego ipse Treveros domi nobiles, licet jam spoliatos  
 atq; vastatos minus tamen everfos rebus esse quam  
 moribus. Adeo graviore in semet hostes externis hos-  
 tibus erant, ut licet jam a barbaris everfi essent, a se ta-  
 men magis everterentur. Sed quid plura? Incredibile  
 est quod loquor: assiduitas illis Calamitatum, aug-  
 mentum Criminum fuit. *Salvian. De Gubern. Dei,*  
*lib. 6.*

will

will see how just God was in punishing *France, Spain, Afric,* and other Parts of the Roman Dominion, by the Irruption and Invasion of barbarous Nations.

I might bring this point nearer home, and shew you that it was Wickedness, and the Contempt of the Gospel and serious Piety in *France*, among the Protestants there, that brought this last severe Persecution upon them. And that some measure of the same Evils brought this Nation near the brink of Destruction also; had not God in mercy retrieved us to this time: *But unless we repent we must all likewise perish.* Luke 13.

But it is high time now to end this *First Part* 3. of our Text, and proceed to the *Second*. And since I have insisted so largely on this, I shall dispatch the next with all possible brevity.

## PART II.

*The Divine Method of Providence in governing Nations applyed to the Jews, with relation to their Case and Circumstances.*

We have taken a view of God's declared Rule and Method in governing Nations in general, and we are now to consider the Application that he makes thereof to the Kingdom of the Jews, in the last of the Verses which make up our Text. The Scope of which I have given before, and therefore shall not trouble you with it again; but shall immediately proceed to set before you the principal Truths therein contained, in some plain Propositions; which therefore will require little proof or illustration.

E

Prop.

Prop. I. The greatest Privileges that God bestows either upon a Nation or Church, will not be enough to save or secure them, if they apostatize and degenerate.

This shines so bright, and is so plain from Scripture and Experience, that to propose it is to prove it: and therefore I need only desire, for illustration of this, that God's Dispensations to the Jewish Nation and Church be considered. I shall but read to you what God says to this People by this same Prophet: Thus saith the Lord of  
 Jer. 7:3, 4, 5, &c. *Hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are these: For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; — then will I cause you to dwell in this place, &c. Behold ye trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit Adultery, and swear falsely, and come and stand before me in this House, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these Abominations? &c. But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it, for the Wickedness of my People Israel. And now because ye have done all these Works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not: therefore will I do to this House which is called by name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your Fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your Brethren, even the whole Seed of Ephraim.*

im. ——— For I spake not unto your Fathers, nor commanded them in the Day that I brought them out of the Land of Egypt, concerning Burnt-offerings and Sacrifices. But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my People, and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. ——— I will cause to cease from the Cities of Judah, and from the Streets of Jerusalem, the Voice of Mirth, and the Voice of Gladness, ——— For the Land shall be desolate. Behold in this Mirror, how little God values Orthodoxy, Profession, yea and Devotion it self, as to the external Part, where Mens Morals are corrupted: and how little all these will avail to the security of a People, who are leud, wicked and prophane. Therefore it is an undeniable Maxim with me, That there are no Opinions and Principles so hateful to God and pernicious to Men, as those which tend to encourage Licentiousness and Immorality.

Prop. II. Tho no Privileges can secure an Apostate Nation and Church from Misery, yet God doth sufficiently declare that he is not willing to give up with those, whom he has once owned as his own People.

The whole tenor and frame of God's Dispositions towards his People shews this, That he loves not to put them away, or to give his Church a Bill of Divorce. His Procedure speaks to his People, what of old he said to Israel: *How shall I give thee up O Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee over to destruction O my Church? How shall I make thee as Admah, and set thee as Zeboim? My Heart is turned, my Bowels* Hos. II. 8.

are kindled together, &c. And upon this score, our Saviour wept over Jerusalem this sad Lamentation: *O Jerusalem, who killest the Prophets*  
 Matth. 23. 37, 38. *and those that are sent unto thee, How often would I have gathered thy children, even as a Hen doth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not? Therefore is your House left unto you desolate. O! therefore if thou hadst known even thou, in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace! but alas! I find they are hid from thine eyes.*

Luk. 19. 41, 42.

It is from this divine mercy, that God gives Men so many warnings and indications of his displeasure because of their sins, and of their danger upon that account. The design of which is to induce them to repent and reform, that no evil may befall them. His Threatnings therefore are no less the product of his Mercy than his Promises are. For they speak forth his Compassions, that he loves not to afflict nor grieve the  
 Lam. 3. 33. *children of Men: and that when he does this, it is because he is as it were forced to do so, that the authority of his Law may not suffer, nor he be reckoned a careless Spectator of human affairs, or a Conniver at sin.*

Prop. III. *If neither Mercies nor Threatnings will work upon a People, whom God hath so singularly privileged; it may justly be expected that God will punish them with severer strokes than other Nations.*

God may bear long with a professing people, but he will not bear always. His patience is great, but he will punish at last, when Men do absolutely refuse his mercy. And Justice and Equity requires, that Mens accounts should bear  
 pro-



proportion to their receipts, and their punishments to both these: for to whom much is given, *Luke 12.*  
of them much will be required; and they that know *47, 48.*  
their Master's will, and do it not, must expect to be  
smitten with more stripes than they that are ignorant thereof. God deals with Nations, in the  
course of his Providence, in proportion to the  
light that he affords them. Heathens, Mahome-  
tans and Jews will not therefore fall under such  
severity as wicked Christians: nor can we sup-  
pose that blinded Papists will meet with the same  
degree of Punishment with inlightned Prote-  
stants. You only, says God to the Jews, have I  
known of all the Nations of the World, therefore *Am. 3. 2.*  
you will I punish above all others for all your ini-  
quities. Whereby we are led to see the pro-  
portion of mercies, sins and punishments; viz.  
that no privileges are so great as those of God's  
Church, and consequently that no sins are so  
highly aggravated as theirs, and that therefore  
none can justly expect to be punished so severe-  
ly as they. Therefore our Saviour tells us that  
it would be more tolerable for Tyre and Sydon, yea  
for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgment, *Luke 10.*  
than for Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, and o- *12, 13, 14.*  
ther places where he had conversed and preached  
so much, and wrought so many miracles.

Prop. IV. Since particular Persons are involved  
in the Fate of Nations, everyone is to do his best,  
in his station and capacity, for the publick Peace  
and Safety.

It was God's command to the Jews of old,  
that they should pray for the Peace even of the Ci- *Jer. 29. 7.*  
ties of their Enemies, where they were to remain  
Captives, because in the Peace of such Cities their

*own was involved.* Surely then there is more reason we should pray for the Peace of the City and Country to which we belong, not as Prisoners but Citizens, who have both our civil and sacred Privileges and Liberties involved with those of the publick.

It is not my business here to speak of the Duties of Rulers and Magistrates. The Scripture gives the Character of the Persons, as to their Qualifications, when it tells us; *That he that ruleth over Men should be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord*; and that such Persons *should be Men fearing God and hating covetousness*; that so they may neither be frighted nor bribed from their Duty. And the Word of God doth no less plainly describe their Office and Work, *viz. that they ought to be Encouragers of, and a Security unto good and virtuous Men, and the Discouragers of wickedness, and the terror of evil doers*; as being the Ministers of God to Men for their good.

2 Sam. 23.  
3, 4.  
Ex. 18.21.  
Rom. 13.  
3, 4.

But that which I am to consider here, is, how private Men, who wish well to the publick Good, may promote this, without exceeding their Sphere, or invading the Magistrates Authority and Office. And in order to speak to this, I find I am as it were insensibly led to an Improvement of the Doctrine of Providence, we have been so long upon.

### IMPROVEMENT.

In all publick Calamities or hazard of them, every good Citizen and Country-man is obliged to be assisting as far as he can to the extricating himself and others from impending misery:  
for

for the Principles both of self-preservation and publick spiritedness require this of him. When a Ship is in hazard of sinking at Sea, all hands are at work, to save themselves from the common calamity. And surely then when a Nation is in hazard of Ruine, either from enemies at home or abroad or both, it is the Duty and Interest of all Men to do their best to secure their Country; especially of those who are, by reason of Place, Interest, Wisdom or Authority, most capable to assist. For what more noble Title can any Man bear than to be, in the best sense, a true and stanch Patriot of his Country, and to have no Interest divided from it? which makes up a great part of the noble Character \* *Lucan* gives of the famous *Cato Uticensis*.

It hath pleased the Great Senate of this Nation, upon supposition that wicked Assassins should find means to cut off his present Majesty, and thereby shake not only the Government but Settlement of the Kingdom, to allow and encourage the rising up of all good Subjects to revenge so horrid a Fact, and to assist towards the future Settlement and Security of our Government and Law. And surely we must be supposed to be equally authorised by the Law to do

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\* *Lucani Pharsal. Lib. 2.*

— Hi mores, hæc duri immora Catonis  
Sesta fuit, servare modum, finemq; tenere,  
Naturamq; sequi, Patriaq; impendere vitam;  
Nec sibi, sed toti genitum se credere mundo.

— Urbi Pater est, Urbiq; Maritus:  
Justitiæ cultor, Rigidi servator Honesti:  
In commune Bonus. Nullosq; Catonis in actus  
Irrepsit partemq; tulit sibi nata voluptas.

our best to secure the Nation from an inundation of Profaneness and Wickedness, whereby we are in hazard to provoke God to become our Enemy, and to bring that and the like ruining Calamities upon us, even to the making our Land desolate, and our People an hissing.

If then any ask me what private Persons ought to do, and are capable of doing as Men and Christians, with respect to a National Security : I shall give my Answer in three words ; they must *Intercede, Unite, and Reform.*

1. In order therefore to the continuance and increase of the Nations Security, Peace and Prosperity, I pray you to intercede with God, that he may continue to be gracious to us, and avert from us the signs of his Displeasure. Pray for all Things, wherein the Prosperity and Establishment of the Nation and Church doth stand. Pray for incorruptedness in Doctrine, especially the fundamental Truths of our holy Religion ; for Purity in Gospel-Worship ; for Charity and Moderation towards them who differ from us ; for Zeal for the honour of God, managed with Wisdom and Prudence ; for a faithful, just and impartial Magistracy ; for a learned, pious and laborious Ministry ; for Unanimity in publick Counsels ; and for the revival of the power of Godliness and practice of Religion among Persons of all Ranks and Sorts. *Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence*

*II. 62. 6, 7. in these things ; and give God no rest till he establish and make our Jerusalem a praise in the earth.*

2. If we would do our best to secure the Nations Interest, let us unite and be at peace among our Selves. *Let us follow peace with all men,*

Heb. 12.

14.

men, and holiness without which we shall never see the Lord. We are to make known our moderation to all Men, because to judge is God's work, not ours. In as far as we have attained, we are commanded by the Apostle to walk by the same Rule, and to mind the same things; as the best way to come to know the things wherein we differ. Our Saviour required this short Creed from the Jews, that as they believed in God, they should believe in him also; assuring us that this was eternal, to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he had sent. And when he rose from the dead, he commanded his Apostles to disciple Men, by baptizing them † into the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. And accordingly this Belief made up the summary of Faith which was known and owned by Christians for two hundred Years after Christ, as we learn from Irenæus and Tertullian ||, both whose Creeds are much

† It is not said in Mat. 28. 19. Ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι, but εἰς τὸ ὄνομα: and therefore it does not speak forth the Authority by which the Apostles acted in dispensing this Ordinance, (for that is expressed in the words preceding, Go ye and teach and baptize:) But it denotes the nature and design of Baptism, which is to initiate and enter us into the Belief of and Obedience unto Father, Son and Spirit; the Trinity being the Foundation of Christianity, as such; as the Belief of one God is the Foundation of all Religion. See the same import of the word, in the business of Baptism, Act. 19. 3, 5. Whereas when the Apostles Actions are spoken of in relation to the Authority they act by, it is ever said ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι, as in Act. 3. 6.

|| It were too long to write out both these Creeds; I shall therefore refer the Reader, for that of Irenæus, to his

much the same, and out of which probably, with some alteration, that which is called the Apostles Creed was afterwards formed. They that believed these things then were owned to be true Christians, if they did live accordingly : and I know not why they should not now. As for other things, and the modes of thinking, methodizing and expressing them, Men must act the best they can, and use the best helps, in an humble fear of mistaking, and trust on God for light. And I know not why I should quarrel with another because he thinks not or speaks not exactly as I do, no more than I quarrel with myself for not having such a clear Perception of things at ten years of age, as I since have reacht : which yet I do as little set up now to

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*his Book Adv. Hæreses, Lib. 1. Cap. 2, & 3. That of Tertullian in his Book, De Virgin. Veland. Cap. 1. is in these words. Regula Fidei una omnino est, sola immobilis & irreformabilis; Credendi scilicet in unicum Deum Omnipotentem, Mundi Conditorem, & Filium ejus Jesum Christum, natum ex Virgine Maria, crucifixum sub Pontio Pilato, tertia die resuscitatum a mortuis, receptum in coelis, sedentem nunc ad dextram Patris, venturum judicare vivos & mortuos, per carnis Resurrectionem. Hac lege fidei manente, cætera jam disciplinæ, & conversationis admittunt novitatem correctionis, operante scilicet & proficiente usq; in finem gratiæ Dei. The Creed of Irenæus mentions also expressly, that the Church did believe In spiritum sanctum, qui per Prophetas Dei Dispensationes & Adventus prædicavit, &c. Which this of Tertullian doth only suppose : For when it is said, natus est Christus ex Virgine Maria, it was understood always, per Spiritum sanctum, &c.*

my



my self as a *ne plus ultra*, as I did then the notions I had got. For it were an intolerable pride, to think I know more than all other Men; and far more to think I knew all things perfectly. Men will differ in some things, as long as the World stands. And it is reasonable to expect they should, considering the vast difference of Complexions, Studies, Capacities, Education, and other Circumstances. And were it not so, we should want one noble occasion for the exercise of Charity, Moderation and Forbearance. I therefore lay it down as a Maxim, that those passionate Men who have no Charity for any but those who just think and say as they do in every punctilio, are either very ignorant or very ill designing Men: and I wish both these Qualities do not meet in too many. But surely all wise and sober Men will see, that we ought to contend for some other things than Ceremonies and Modes of speaking. When Infidelity and Prophaneness undermine us, and when we have both intestine and foreign enemies who are ready, if they had opportunity, to sell us to *France* and *Rome*; it is certainly time for us to be at peace among our selves.

3. If ye would know further what ye are to do for the Security of this Nation, and the Church of God therein; let me tell you, that ye must not only Intercede and Unite, but ye must also Reform. And seeing Reformation relates both to our selves and others, I consider it accordingly in both respects.

1<sup>st</sup>. Reform your selves, if ye would be useful to others: for it is a great truth that \* *Plaro* \* Alcibiades takes notice of, that they that would make others ad. i. virtuous must be virtuous themselves. And there-

therefore not only are we obliged to mind this great Work, in order to our own Peace and Happiness, but also in order to be serviceable to the Publick. But it is not my business to insist upon this Head, and therefore I shall speak no more unto it. However, the necessary Connexion this hath with what comes next to be considered, obliged me to put you in mind of it.

2/y. Study not only personal Reformation but publick Reformation also, according to your stations, opportunities and abilities. We are not born only for our selves, but are obliged to be serviceable in the World, as much as we can.

And here bear with me, I pray you, in allowing my self some compass of thought: which I hope I shall bring home appositely enough to the design of this exercise.

When a serious and sober Man forms to himself a genuin and abstracted Idea of the Doctrine according to Godliness, which we call Religion, from Reason and Revelation, it is impossible to avoid coming under some lively impressions of its Excellency, Amiableness and Usefulness. The Reasonableness and Certainty of its Principles oblige him to believe its verity. The admirable and noble Truths it proposeth, and lets in the mind to the contemplation of, must needs ravish his Soul, and fill it with wonder. The Privileges and Blessings it proposeth, as attainable, must be supposed to excite his desire and hope, and make him fall in with its Scope and Design. The Rules it proposeth are so reasonable, plain and pleasant, that they are capable both to satisfie his mind, and encourage him to a ready compliance with them. And the

the belief of the Promises and Threatnings, which are added as the Sanction of the Divine Laws, must of necessity render his Study and Practice of Religion proportionably serious and uniform. Upon these and the like Considerations, a good Man can hardly forbear to cry out with an \* Antient Christian Writer: O, Religion more Regal than all Kings! for what Kings attained by force of Arms, this hath overturned without Arms. They pursued it with Persecutions and Massacres: This chearfully underwent these, and by the same erected its Trophies over the Conquerors. The Branches of the Church being cut off, the Fruit of Faith did grow the more, &c.

But when such a Person awakes out of his Meditations on this Head, and considers what Entertainment Religion finds amongst his fellow-Creatures, for whose advantage it is calculated, he cannot but look upon most Men with Pity and Concern. He cannot avoid being thus affected, when he sees some Men disputing themselves out of the belief of the most reasonable and plain Principles of both Natural and Revealed Religion; others scoffing at the most serious and sacred Truths thereof, particularly the Divinity of our Blessed Saviour, *who is the Image of the invisible God, and the † First-producer, or Bringer-forth of every Creature*; and most Men living and acting as if it were their chief Study to disgrace their own Profession. I say, such a Man

Col. I. 15.

\* Nilus apud Photium in Bibl. Cod. 276.

† So I take Liberty to render the Original Word, for which I am oblig'd to satisfy the World. It is plain there

Man cannot but find his Spirit stir and move within him at so sad a sight, as it was with *Paul* at *Athens*, when he saw the whole City given to Idolatry.

He begins therefore to consider that he is a Citizen of the World, not made to live a Cloyster'd Life, merely to hammer out some Notions to please his own Fancy, far less to act no other part than that of the Beast, to mind nothing but good Pasture and Grazing, in order to eat and drink, revel, and then die : But he considers his Relation to others as a Member of

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is a twofold account given of Christ in Col. 1. 15, 16, &c. The first is of Christ, as God, or the eternal  $\Delta\omicron\gamma\textcircled{\text{G}}$ , (which the Chaldee Paraphrases call the Shekinah or Memrah Jehova) in the 15th, 16th, and 17th Verses. The second is of Christ as Mediator, v. 18, 19. In both these respects he is called  $\pi\epsilon\omega\tau\omicron\tau\omicron\kappa\textcircled{\text{G}}$ ; and hence some explain the first of these accounts by the second. But this is such a force on the words, that even *Le Clerc* deserts and contradicts *Grotius* and *Dr. Hammond* on this Head. And had he observed the true import of  $\pi\epsilon\omega\tau\omicron\tau\omicron\kappa\textcircled{\text{G}}$  in this place, he had further confirmed what he says. I shall not debate here what the Antiquity of the Greek Accents is; but it is sufficiently known that our Antient Copies of the New Testament are without either Accents or other Points: And therefore we are left at liberty, as the sense leads us, to put the Accent here either upon the first or last Omikron. The word  $\pi\epsilon\omega\tau\omicron\tau\omicron\kappa\textcircled{\text{G}}$ , tho often taken in a Passive sense, is also taken sometimes in an Active one: So we must understand *Homer*, Lib. 17. l. 5. *Iliad*. where describing the Affection of *Menelaus*, in his running to and embracing the dead Body of his Friend *Patroclus*, he compares his Behaviour in this to that of a young Cow, when she sees her Calf kill'd, never having had any before.

*Aug.*

of a Family, City, Church and Nation, and therefore finds it his Duty to be as publickly useful to others as he can, without being impertinently so.

But it is not enough for a Man to be convinced, that it is his Duty to assist towards the carrying on a Work of Reformation in the place where he lives, unless he knew in what way and manner this is to be attempted. He must therefore consider, that tho our Laws corroborate Revealed Religion, yet Christianity as such, and the Civil Constitution remain distinct things. Human Laws relate only to the outward Acti-

Ἀμὲν δ' αὖτ' αὐτῷ βαῖν', ὡς τὴν μετὰ πότμον μίσην  
Πρωτόγονον, κινυμένην, ἔπειν ἐδιδύα, τόκοιο.

And that therefore we take the word in this sense here, the scope of the Apostle constrains us: For pray what Argument is this; Christ is the First-born of all Creatures; for he made them all? Besides that, to be the first-born of Creatures, seems to import no more than this, that Christ is a Creature, tho the first produced of them. But this is strong sense: Christ is the first Producer, Bringer-forth, or Original of every Creature; or he is, as it were, the Womb and Source of all things; for by him were all things created, &c. If Athanasius and the Nicene Council had not understood the Apostle in this sense, with what face could they have urg'd this Scripture against the Arians, as I find they did? See Athan. Narrat. de Concilio Nicano, Tom. 1. And if Origen had not also understood this word so, to what purpose had he made use of it to prove that Christ was the Beginning and Original of the World? when he says, Quod est omnium Principium, nisi Dominus noster Jesus Christus, πρωτόγονος ὅλης creaturæ? Orig. Hom. 1. in Gen. The world therefore should be rendered Primipara, and not Primogenitus.

ons of Men, in order to the Good of the Community : They promise no Rewards to Sincerity, Piety and vertuous Thoughts and Affections; nor do they threaten Punishments against Hypocrisy, Malice, and lustful Imaginations. Men fear no Imprisonment, Fining or Torment, for sceptical, heretical and erroneous Opinions, as such, nor for malicious and revengeful Thoughts. And therefore in all such things, Men must be left to answer to Him, who gives Law to the Mind, who knows the Soul and Heart, and has erected the Tribunal of Conscience in every Man's Breast. For it is the most unaccountable thing in the World, that Mens Opinions should be extorted by Inquisitions and Torments, and they punished according to a Law, under which, in that respect, they are not ; since where there is no Law, there is no Transgression. Indeed where Christianity is established, and Penal Laws are in force against such who revile and blaspheme its Profession and Principles, those that do so, deserve the most severe Treatment, who thus dare publicly to affront the Government. Besides, some Opinions are such a Violation of the Law of Reason, and lead to such destructive Consequents, with respect to Human Society, such as avowed Atheism, and some Popish Tenets, that it concerns all wise Governments to guard against them. But as to different Sentiments amongst Christians in lesser things, since God deals with us as Reasonable Creatures, we are certainly to act so in relation to one another. Christianity, as such, was never commanded to be carried on by any other compulsive Arms, than those of strong and convincing Reasons, and pious and  
pathe-



## for Reformation of MANNERS.

pathetick Exhortations: And yet when Christianity is incorporated with the Law, it ought to be defended and maintain'd in the same way that we defend our other Privileges and Properties. And therefore to argue from the Passive Obedience of the Primitive Christians, when the Law of the Empire was against them, and thence press us to the like Carriage, who have the Law for us, is an odd way of reasoning: for the inverting of this is that which I think to be true arguing upon this Head, *viz.* that if Christians ought not to defend their Religion by War and Arms, when the Law of the Land is against them, they are, by the same reason, obliged to defend it that way when the Law is for it, in case any Invasion be made upon it. This I urge only as an Argument, as we use to say, *ad hominem*: For I would not be thought to say, that it is absolutely unlawful to defend Christianity by Arms, even where the Law is wholly against it. But to return, I say that it is not Opinions properly that a Man is to prosecute by Human Law and the Penalties thereof; but it is the Practice of Men, if not only, yet chiefly that we are to set our selves to reform, in relation to the Security of the Community, *ne quid Respublica detrimenti capiat*, that the Nation suffer not, according to the Precaution of the old Romans.

But as for bare Opinions, and how far these are to be tolerated, my Subject allows me not to speak much; and so much has been of late written on this Head, as renders further Disquisitions this way almost needless. However, I cannot but observe something remarkable in the Practice of the Jewish Church: For, not to  
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See  
Jer. 35. 2,  
3, 7yc.

speak of the Sects that were among them in the latter times, nor of the particular Order of the *Rechabites* of old, it deserves our serious Consideration, that notwithstanding their strictness as to the Mosaical Rites, yet they thought fit to dispense with them in favour of those who renounced Heathenish Idolatry, and owned the one, true and living God. They allowed not only of full Converts, who came up in all things to their size, whom they called *the Profelytes of the Covenant*, but of those also that owned only the first Principles of Religion, which were supposed to be comprehended in the seven Precepts called Noachical, as being traditionally believed to have been given out by *Noah* to all his Posterity; which seem to comprehend the Decalogue in some sort. The Jews tell us they were these.

1. *Thou shalt not worship false Gods, nor bow down to Images.*
2. *Thou shalt not take the Name of God in vain, nor blaspheme him.*
3. *Thou shalt not kill or murder.*
4. *Thou shalt not uncover thy Parents Nakedness, nor commit Adultery.*
5. *Thou shalt not steal, nor take any thing that belongs to another.*
6. *Superiors shall judg between Man and Man, and act justly therein.*
7. *The Member of a living Creature shall not be eaten whilst the Creature is yet alive; or, the Flesh shall not be eaten with the Blood while the Life is in it.*

Those who owned these things, were called *the Profelytes of the Gate*, because they were not allowed to go within the Gate to worship, as the other Profelytes. But in the second Temple there was a place built for them, which was called *Atrium Gentium*, the Court of the Gentiles: For they retained the Name of Gentiles, to distinguish them from the other Profelytes,

lytes, who were reckoned Jews. Of the number of the Profelytes of the Gate, was *Naaman* the Syrian under the Old Testament, and the Centurion (mentioned *Luke* 7.) and *Cornelius* under the New. That the devout *Cornelius* was one is plain, because he is called a *Gentile*, and uncircumcised (for which see *Acts* 10. 2, 34, 35, 45, 47. and *chap.* 11. 3, 18.) unless we make him an absolute *Gentile*, and no Profelyte at all. Of these Profelytes, I suppose, *Luke* speaks frequently in the *Acts*, as *chap.* 13. 43. and 16. 14. and 17. 4, 17. and 18. 4. when he makes mention of *σεβόμενοι*, Worshippers, or devout Persons, who frequented the Synagogues, and yet are distinguished from the Jews, and are sometimes called Greeks or Gentiles. And it seems to have been this sort of Profelytes chiefly that imbraced the Gospel at first. This Moderation and Toleration of the Jewish Church deserves to be minded more than it usually is. And our Reformers certainly acted from this generous Principle, when they made Liberty of Conscience and 'Thought in disputable Matters, relating to the things of Revelation, the Foundation of separating from Popery, declaring for a Judgment of Discretion, as the Privilege of every Man, in searching the Scriptures for himself, as the *Bereans* *Act.* 17. 11. did, against a pretended Human Infallibility. And so *Paul* had long ago determined, when he commands us to try all things, and to embrace or retain that which is good. *1 Thess.* 5. 21. Nay, it is the Precept of our great Master *Jesus Christ* to do so: For he expressly enjoins his Followers, *Mat.* 23. 9. That they should call no Man the Father of their Faith and Religion, but God only, and that they should

should own none as the Great Doctor and Teacher of the Christian Creed but himself; that so Mens Faith might be founded upon a Divine Basis and Foundation, and not upon an human one.

And it deserves certainly our Consideration, that the Providence of God so ordered it, that the first \* Edict that was ever made in favour of Christianity, was properly an Edict for Liberty of Conscience.

A wise Man therefore considering these things, finds that he is to act in a quite different way in attempting the reforming Men as to bad Principles, from what he is to take in relation to Immorality. In reference to the first, it is not severity, or even hard words, that he is to fight against them with, for these ways can never convince the mind of any Man; but he is to attack them by strong and convincing Arguments. But Immorality and wicked Actions, being against both Natural and Revealed Religion, and tending not only to Mens own hurt, but the disturbance of Societies and Communi-

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\* *Lactantius de Mort. Persec. Cap. 42. hath preserv-  
ed to us this Edict of Constantine and Licinus, wherein  
are these words; ——— Ut daremus & Christianis &  
Omnibus Liberam Potestatem sequendi Religionem  
quam quisq; voluisset, &c. Itaq; hoc consilio salubri  
ac rectissima ratione ineundum esse credidimus, ut nulli  
omnino facultatem abnegandum putaremus, qui vel ob-  
servationi Christianorum, vel ei religioni mentem suam  
dederet quam ipse sibi aptissimam esse sentiret, ut pos-  
sit nobis summa Divinitas, cujus Religioni liberis men-  
tibus obsequimur, in omnibus solitum favorem suum  
benevolentiamq; præstare.*

ties ; it is therefore unquestionably the Duty of every honest Man to do what he can to check and put a stop to the Sins and Vices of the place he lives in, as his Authority, Ability, Opportunity or Station in the World give him leave : For it has by all Men in all Ages been agreed upon, that *Salus Populi suprema Lex est*, that the Safety of a Nation is the fundamental Law thereof. A saying which is as true in a religious as in a civil Sense. And where a Nation is so happy, as not only to found its Laws upon the Principles of Nature and Reason, but to incorporate therewith the superadded Principles of Revelation, so as to confirm and corroborate the Laws of God by a Civil Sanction : there a good and publick-spirited Person may act for the honour of God, and good of Mankind at the same time, not only with freedom but Authority ; tho no private Man ought to usurp the Power and Authority of the Publick Magistrate.

Now there are three things that all of us ought to make conscience of, in order to promote this great and noble Design of Reformation of Life and Manners.

1. We ought to recommend Religion and Holiness to others by our own Lives and Conversations. In vain shall we attempt to reform those Vices in our Neighbour which we practise our selves. There is nothing more influential than good or bad Example. How many Parents ruin their Children, and Masters of Families their Servants, by their wicked Lives ! Nay the Sins of Rulers often infect the People so, that the worst of Sins have become modish and fashionable upon that very reason, that great men did so.



so. He that considers how a good or bad King of old did, as it were, alter the very genius of the Jewish Nation, will sufficiently see the force of Example. But such is the degeneracy of our Nature, that we are sooner hurt by bad than bettered by good Example; for as *Seneca* says truly, *Vitia discuntur sine Magistro*, Vices are learn'd without a Teacher. Therefore we are to abstain from all evil our selves, and as  
 1 Thess. 5. much as we can from *the very appearance of evil*.  
 22. Let us therefore as our Saviour adviseth, study  
 Mat. 5. 16. to live so, that our *Good Works may shine so before Men, that they may believe Religion is indeed a verity, and may come themselves also to glorify our Father in Heaven, by a holy Life and Conversation.*

2. In order to promote Reformation, let us faithfully reprove those that we see doing amiss:  
 Lev. 19. 17 for we are commanded, *not to suffer sin upon*  
 1 Tim. 5. *them, nor be our selves Partakers of their Sins*, by  
 22. conniving at them. But this is a tender Point, and ought therefore to be prudently managed, in relation to the Circumstances of the Person, Time and Place: for otherwise Reproof will be taken for humour, and fall short of reaching the end.

3. If we would know further what we are capable to do in order to reform the Manners of Men, in the places where we live; let us remember, that it is the Duty of every good Citizen and Country-man to aid and assist the Magistrates and Government, in punishing Vice and Wickedness. To inform them of notorious Criminals, and to facilitate the seizing and arraigning them for Lewdness, Blasphemy, Thefts and Murders, is as Honourable as it is Necessary,



sary, and is the very *Reverse* of Informing against pious and good Men in a time of Persecution. And surely as this is the Duty of every one in particular, so it is the part of wise and good Men, to be mutually assisting to one another, in a time of general Degeneracy and Corruption; and for this end to associate together in Assemblies and Societies, for the more regular and better carrying on of so great a Work. When *Israel* rebell'd against God, in worshipping the *Egyptian* \* Idol sacred to *Osiris*, which was the figure of a Bullock or Calf; *Moses* desired that all that were on God's side, against that Idolatry, might go forth armed, and kill the Ringleaders of the Rebellion, in order to appease God's Anger: which had the desired Effect. In like manner when God had sent a Plague upon that People, for their Idolatry and Whoredoms with the *Midianitish* Women; *Phineas* his zeal, in slaying *Zimri* and *Cozbi*, was so acceptable to God, that the Plague was immediately removed upon that heroical Act. I know these are extraordinary Examples, and not to be drawn into Imitation. Yet they do not, for all that, want their use, as shewing us how acceptable to God attempts of Reformation are. Had there been but ten righteous Men in *Sodom*, it had not been destroyed. Or had there been any Society in *Israel*, like these that are now erected amongst us, it might have done much to have averted the *Babylonians* and *Chaldeans* from being sent

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\* Herod. Lib. 2. C. 42. Diod. Lib. 1. Plut. pag. 362, 364.

Isa. 59. 1,  
2, 3, 4, 14,  
15, 16, 18.

to their Destruction: as we have reason to believe, from the very words of our Text, and what follows it. For *God's hand was not shortened that it could not save, nor his Ear heavy that he could not hear: but the Iniquities of that obstinate People did separate between God and them. Their hands were defiled with Blood, and their Lips with Lies. They trusted to Vanity, and none called for Justice. Nay Judgment was turned away backward, and Justice made to stand afar off: so that Truth fell in the Street, and Equity could not enter. And all this while God waited to see what they would do, and wondered that there was no Man to appear for Righteousness, neither any Intercessor for a sinful People. No wonder then, if at last he dealt with them according to their Deeds, repaying Fury to his Adversaries, and recompence to his Enemies.* Blessed be God therefore, that he hath inspired so many worthy Persons at this time and place, with such a generous and good Design, as the Reforming the Manners of Men. It is the greatest Symptom, that I know of, that God has not yet given up with the Nation; and which I add to those I once gave my Thoughts upon, in a small \* Essay on the state of these Nations. And therefore bear with me, if I make bold to wind up this Discourse, in a brief Address to the worthy and honoured Promoters of this good Work.

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\* *The Rod or the Sword*, pag. 64, &c.

## *An Address to the Societies for Reformation of Manners.*

**I**T is an old and true Observation, *That it is a great- Prov. 16.*  
*er Victory to subdue ones own Spirit, than to conquer 32.*  
 a City. But it is certainly more heroical still, when those who have got the Victory over Sin in themselves, subdue it in others also; especially when the Influence becomes general, and aims at no less than the Reformation of Cities and Kingdoms. Such Persons are as far above the fam'd *Alexanders* and *Cesars*, and other Hero's of the World, as it is more noble to be Good than to be Great; to save than to destroy Men and Nations: and such Men deserve Columns, and Statues, Obelisks and Triumphal Arches, far better than those, to whose Memory they are usually erected.

I know ye are above these vain and empty things, as chusing to be good rather than to make a noise with appearing so, to be publickly useful without affecting to be publickly known. This is indeed a Frame that suits well with the religious Work ye are employed in. But as ye are concerned to promote the Honour of God and Christ, so ye may be assured ye shall not lose your Reward. Your Names are written in the Book of God's Remembrance, and recorded in the everlasting Registers of Heaven; and at the great Day ye may justly expect to be owned and honoured by your Lord, before God, Angels and Men.

Go on therefore in the strength of the Lord, and fear no Opposition; Ye have both the Laws of God and Man on your side: All good Men are for you, and will assist you with their Prayers and best Endeavours: and even the Consciences of Criminals take part with you against themselves. Your end is the same with that of the Gospel and Grace of God, \* which  
 G brings  
 Tit. 2. 11, 12.

\* So I crave leave to render this Place as it is in the Margin of our larger Bibles, rather than as it is in our English

*brings Salvation to all men, by teaching them to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live righteously, soberly and godly in this World, as Expectants of another.*

Shall Papists be so zealous for their Superstitions, as not to confine themselves at home to keep up the credit of their way, but to compass Sea and Land every where to make Profelytes? and shall not we be as zealous for the things of Christianity it self? Shall Atheists, Deists, and irreligious Men have their stated Clubs and Meetings to undermine the Principles of our Holy Religion, and corrupt the Morals of Men? and shall not good men join in Societies to countermine these Enemies of God, Christ and Goodness?

Be encouraged therefore, my Friends, to proceed in the glorious Design ye are prosecuting. Drive the Buyers and Sellers out of Gods Temple; build up the Walls of our Jerusalem, tho ye be forc'd to do it with Swords and Spears in your hands. Imitate your blessed Master, in going about always doing good. This way ye will become the true Patriots of your Country's Liberties both Sacred and Civil, and be called the Repairers of our Breaches, and Restorers of Paths to dwell in. The present Generation doth praise you, and Posterity will rise up and call you Blessed. Peace and Joy within your own Breasts, a sense of the Divine Love and Approbation, and the comfortable expectation of an happy rest from your Labours, where your Works will follow you: these things, I say, will be the consequents of honouring and serving God and your Country; whilst\* those that do otherwise are haunted

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*English Text: for the Original is plain and express for me in this case; for which I appeal to every man that is capable to read the Text in the Greek.*

\* Many Instances might be advanced to shew what Remorse of Conscience those have been under, when dying, who have been negligent in improving Opportunities of Publick Good, which God put in their hand. Grotius is said

haunted by remorse of Conscience either here or hereafter.

May the good and gracious God direct and encourage you in all your Endeavours of this kind, and bless and prosper them, to the promoting of Religion and Virtue, and the suppressing Ungodliness and Immorality, for his own Honour, the Nations Security, and your own and all good mens Comfort. May all our unhappy Contentions end in this one, which of us shall promote Piety, Love, and Goodness most. May Truth, Holiness, Justice, Mercy and Peace, ever make their abode amongst us. And for these ends may these happy Societies be so blest of God, and increase; that by this as well as by other means, it may be said of this and the other Nations; *Blessed art thou, O People, who art in such a case, whose God is the Lord.* Pl. 144.  
15. And as we do heartily desire these things; so let us beg of God that he may grant these our Petitions, and say on his part, as we on ours, *Amen.*

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*said to have cried out, Ah vitam perdidit operose nihil agendo. And so Salmasius and many others have confessed on a Death-bed, that Seriousness and Serviceableness were to be preferred before all the Learning in the World. Surely then they are more excellent than other things that Men are so much taken with usually. I cannot on this occasion forbear mentioning a Distich which a Person of Quality and Eminency composed when dying; wherein he expresses both pathetically and briefly, the sense he had of his not improving his Parts and Opportunities for God and his Country.*

*Viximus: at Patria & Pietas ignoscite. Vobis*

*Dum potui doleo consuluisse minus.*

*cheu!*

*Quantula vita hominum est; morimur dum vivimus,*

*Si sapias exemplo, vive Deo & Patriæ.*

**F I N I S.**